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CORRESPONDENCE

Priests in the World

Pittsburgh, Pa.

To the Editors: Justus George Lawler ["The Problem of Priests in the World," April 16] has correctly seen that there is today a "problem" of priests in the world and the intimate and necessary relationship of any Christian presence in the world to continuing membership in the Church. However, in joining this problem of Christian witness to the distinction of offices within the Church, viz. those of laymen and clergy, Mr. Lawler has proposed a solution which demands deeper consideration. In associating the mission of "the ordained . . . primarily to the proclamation of the one truth" and that of "the laity . . . to elevate the multiplicity of matter," he has easily resolved—but in the process deeply dehumanized—the continuing tension in every Christian's vocation.

The most profound mystery of Jesus Christ is the simultaneous totality of His humanity and His divinity. Insofar as we Christians by our baptism and confirmation are called to be Christ, we too must learn with God's help to live that same mystery of our created being, striving to be totally His, while being totally ourselves. But insofar as we are created in time, space, and community, we are as men and as Christians constitutionally presented with the tension of the "one truth" and the "multiplicity of matter."

Thus when Mr. Lawler speaks of "laicization of heart" on the part of the priest, he seems to imply that this de-Christianizing of values might not be just as fatal for the Christian layman, whose mission is "to elevate the multiplicity of matter." By contrasting the layman, "who cannot ordinarily place himself above time and disinterestedly expect that the seed-bearing work will grow without his culture of its soil" with the ordained who "after having borne their emphatic witness to spirit must put their faith in that spirit," Mr. Lawler, I fear, asks the Christian layman not to be Christian and the ordained not to be men.

Mr. Lawler correctly invokes Newman, Bishop Ancel, and Yves Congar in attacking this "laicization of heart" as fundamentally contradictory to the Christian's function as witness to God's glory and love of men within the Church. None of his citations convince me, however, that these same men would not also apply their censure to any Christian laymen who might laicize his heart. As baptized Christians we are all, layman and clergy alike, called to live out that incarnational mystery of our Lord in the world until He comes again. Truly, ordination to the service of the Church bestows a special responsibility before God to preserve and distribute His Word, but this is added to and does not replace the call of baptism—to live Christ totally.

ROBERT W. FUGERE
The Oratory, Pittsburgh

The Heart of the Matter

Portville, N.Y.

To the Editors: One can only admire the clarity with which Justus George Lawler bases his case for the ecclesiastical organization man on a subtle interpretation of the lessons of history. I refer to his article, "The Problem of Priests in the World," in the April 16 issue.

Mr. Lawler does not go to the heart of the matter. Neither, I think, does Yves Congar in the final words of a passage which Mr. Lawler quotes for its "utterly probative" value: ". . . profound truths which the saints have lived in the Church and for which at this very moment confessors are offering without glory before the eyes of men, their health, their liberty, and the very life of the body."

If what Congar means and Lawler accepts by "liberty" in this passage is liberty of conscience, then I think they are preferring organization man to man *tout court*. And they are limiting membership in the Church to organization men of that type.

There is enough tragedy in the life of educated people without adding this one. Whatever the "profound truths which the saints have lived in the Church" of organization men, it seems to me, derives from a (mistaken) application of the principle of liberty of conscience. If history teaches us anything, it is that organization men get their chance to bring this principle into play only after centuries of resistance to its limitation have threatened the progress of the organization. The people who provide this resistance at the cost of "their health . . . and the very life of the body," are better friends of the organization than its organization men precisely because they primarily exemplify this primary principle.

GERARD HINRICHS

Catholic Lag

Wernersville, Pa.

To the Editors: Justus George Lawler, at the beginning of his article "The Problem of Priests in the World" [April 16], states that "The Second Vatican Council should not be praised too extravagantly for having embraced the age of reason, for endorsing views . . . which have largely been commonplace among secular humanists for a hundred and fifty years." He then goes on to his main theme: that of the constant danger of priests becoming too involved in temporal matters. These matters, he feels, should be left to the laity. He proceeds to draft a strict dichotomy of the proclaimers of the truth (the priest) and the implementers of the truth (the laity). According to Mr. Lawler, if I read him rightly, the two should never meet.

While the relative merits of the dichotomy itself are debatable, and, probably, refutable, the point I wish to make is that one of the major causes of the gigantic lag of Catholic views behind those held by the secular humanists is precisely the aloofness and irrelevance of the priesthood in the world. The problem has not been too much involvement in the world; rather, it has been too little. The Church has managed to maintain its archaic views of temporal matters mainly because of

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the dichotomy which Mr. Lawler wishes not only to continue, but to cleanse of any mutual contagion.

The removal of the priesthood from those issues which concern the laymen has led to the Church's preoccupation with its own organization in preference to the needs of its non-professional members.

To gain relevance in the world of the layman, the priest must come off his pulpit and be counted among the activists. He does not justify his human nature and, I feel, his priestliness by expounding on spiritual and/or temporal matters and then retreating to the sanctuary to await the news. The priest is as much a part of the world as the layman, and to act as if this bond does not exist for both is deception.

RAYMOND J. SAUER

Questionable Hope

Concord, Mass.

To the Editors: The mission of the Church in Justus George Lawler's article, "The Problem of Priests in the World" [April 16], was overly distinguished to the point where another problem arises. Granted that the roles of the ordained priest and the layman are different, are they so distinct that only "the layman who hears the word has an obligation to seek to bring the times into joint with it . . .?"

Is not the priest also a hearer of the message of Christ? Does he not have to see that the future is not inevitable? Can he rest in preaching the message with a questionable hope that the layman will hear the word with openness?

History has pointed out priests who became involved in the temporal order and lapsed into the unfortunate condition of giving priority to "the realization of these temporal goods." Is this necessary? Cannot the priest's love for the Church and his vocation overcome this possibility?

The priest has to bear witness to the message of Christ not only in word; he must listen to his word and lead in the realization of the message in

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AN END TO THE SHAME?

Unless he is blind and insensitive, no Catholic can contemplate the long, bloody history of Christian anti-Semitism without shame. If he works at it, he can of course devise many excuses to explain away Christian barbarity: medieval ignorance, intrusive pagan influences, faulty biblical exegesis, and on and on. But the facts of history cannot be changed and no array of ingenious explanations can wash away Catholic guilt. That guilt must be confessed. Even more, the Church has the inescapable duty of using every means at its disposal to rid its body of the disease of anti-Semitism.

At the end of the third session of the Council it was generally believed that the Fathers had taken a decisive step in that direction. By an overwhelming vote on the last day of the session a draft declaration on the relationship of the Church to non-Christians, which included a section on the Jews, was approved. The draft, from all reports, was a strong one, repudiating anti-Semitism, rejecting the charge that the Jews are a cursed people, and specifically denying that the Jewish people, either past or present, can be condemned as deicides. The vote was taken as a striking victory for the forces of enlightenment, though no one could claim that it had been an easy victory. There had, in fact, been one crisis after another. The second session ended on an ominous note when a chapter on the Jews was not allowed to come to a vote. Between the second and the third session, the draft was considerably weakened, and only by dint of vigorous protests was its original strength restored during the third session. During these struggles, the source of the opposition became clear: conservative members of the Curia and bishops from Arab nations, the latter responding to political pressure at home. In any event, to judge from the vote, that opposition had been overcome.

So the matter stood until recent weeks. Then, in a long story in the

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New York *Times*, it was reported that the draft was again running into serious trouble. How could this be possible?

According to the report, the draft was submitted to an ad hoc, extra-conciliar commission of four men. Their task was to clear up a few details in line with the difficulties expressed by some 242 fathers who had voted only conditional approval. On that commission, supposedly, is Bishop Luigi Carli of Segni, Italy, who has gone on record as holding that the Jewish people, both past and present, are responsible for the Crucifixion and thus for "deicide." That purported fact, together with the Pope's Passion Sunday address with its reference to the Jewish "people" who rejected and then killed Christ, the persistent opposition of the Middle Eastern bishops and conservative Curia members, all spell extreme danger to the draft. So the story went. Since then the Secretariat for Christian Unity has denied that the draft has passed from their hands to any other commission.

Once again, then, rumor is king. Where does the truth lie? We do not know, but it is surely difficult to overlook the Pope's address. That in itself is cause for alarm; it is difficult to believe that, on such a delicate matter, the Pope could have made a slip of the tongue. Nor is it unreasonable to suspect that the Holy See could give in to political pressures. This it has done in the past.

The wisest course at this point is to assume the worst. There is probably no real danger that the majority wishes of the fathers expressed at the end of the third session will be ignored. The vote of approval for the draft cannot be set aside. Where the real danger lies is in the possibility of a compromise solution: a strategic word changed here or there, the introduction of ambiguities and murky language. All of this could be done in the name of Church unity or for the sake of a final unanimous vote.

There must be no compromise. There must be no carefully worded statements which can be read in more than one way. There must be no sops thrown to the opposition. In short, the final declaration must be direct and unequivocal, subject to one and only one reading. It is shameful enough that the Church has taken two thousand years to come to grips with its guilt. This shame has been compounded by the long struggle with the Council to achieve a strong position. No wonder many Jews have been pessimistic; they have suffered too long to take an optimistic view. If the Council fails, or if it equivocates, the Church will stand condemned. That judgment will be justly deserved.

DOMINICAN CRISIS

Were ours a parliamentary government of the British type, the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic might well be a subject for debating whether the government should remain in office. Public debate on foreign policy has a different function in the U.S.: it constructs a set of limits within which the actions of the President and the State Department must remain in the future. Since the collapse of the isolationist rationale, the proper limits of United States intervention have been in doubt. Latin America has always been a "special case" in U.S. foreign policy thinking, but particularly since the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban missile crisis the U.S. has been talking intervention and non-intervention at the same time. The Dominican crisis must be the starting place for constructing new limits.

First, the United States would clearly be justified in intervening against a Communist "take-over" (*not* a genuine popularly supported Communist movement) in a nation near our borders. Second, the United States would clearly be justified in intervening to evacuate American citizens and other nationals from a chaotic revolutionary situation where massacre was a distinct possibility and unilateral American action the only practical alternative.

The events in the Dominican Republic fall into neither of these two clear-cut categories. From the start, President Johnson was surely aware of some Communist elements connected with Juan Bosch's forces. From the start, the President's decision to send troops for evacuation purposes must have included a proportion of "just in case . . ." calculation. So the U.S.'s original actions soon began to exceed the limits of the second category of justified intervention. It was then claimed that control of the rebellion had been seized by Communists; hence the first category for legitimate intervention applied. This development, however, had all the earmarks of the self-fulfilling prophecy, since there is some evidence that it was the U.S.'s intervention which helped bring Communists to the fore.

"In the darkness of conflict and violence, revolution and confusion, it is not easy to find clear and uncloudy truths." This remark of President Johnson's must surely be the watchword of any responsible commentator on the Dominican crisis. Yet the very vagueness of the Dominican events is perhaps the key to their analysis. In the rush of events, when the time factor weighs upon decision-makers, pre-formed assumptions — the benefit of the doubt — count heavily in the interpretation of scanty and hastily gathered information. The publicly available evidence for the charges that Bosch's

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rebellion had large Communist elements who have now seized control is by no means convincing. Is simply the presence of five dozen Communist-trained activists, whose precise role and influence have yet to be detailed, enough to swing the U.S. toward considering this situation one of the first category, that of a "take-over" by a Communist minority? If so, the limits of permissible U.S. intervention will be disastrously stretched in the years to come. The next decades may well see socially progressive revolutions in half a dozen Latin American nations, including a giant like Brazil. There will inevitably be Communists connected with those revolutions. Will we therefore automatically oppose or even intervene against them?

There are mitigating factors in the Dominican crisis. Juan Bosch is far from a strong leader; his continued absence from the scene of events makes all the more plausible the supposition that he may not know who is running his own revolution. But there were also alternatives for the U.S. of lesser magnitude than direct intervention. A naval blockade, for example, the action taken during the original revolution which overthrew the Trujillo regime, would have established U.S. presence without overly forcing the course of events.

These have been considerations of the implications of the Dominican crisis for future U.S. Latin American policy. What about the future of the Dominican Republic itself? The United States has intervened. Many voices across the world have protested this intervention; but much of their protest has been directed not so much toward the status of our unilateral action in international law, but toward the simple fact that the consequence of this action appears to be the support of an undemocratic military junta. Now that the United States has intervened, it must intervene all the way. It must do everything possible to see that a popular, freely chosen Dominican government results from this conflict. President Johnson has promised this. Events suggest his words will not be easily implemented.

NEWBURGH AGAIN

Earlier this year, a small group of zealots initiated a campaign to cancel a speech by novelist John Howard Griffin at a Catholic Action convention in Milwaukee. After an open letter, phone calls and rumors accusing him of producing obscene literature and of being part of a "Communist superfront," the priest in charge of the convention talked Griffin into withdrawing, "simply to avoid public controversy" and "in the good name of the Church." In other words, the priest bowed before a smear campaign. *The National Catholic Reporter* commented at the time: ". . . to give way to slander is to give power to slanderers—to give them a sense of accomplishment, a taste for more such victories. . ."

The *Reporter's* prophecy was correct. Another such victory has just been won in Newburgh, N.Y., where Father Philip Berrigan, S.J., has been driven from the faculty of Epiphany Apostolic College for his stand on Vietnam. In response to a smear campaign labeling him a Communist, he has been transferred to a parish in Baltimore. His freedom to speak his mind on the moral issues involved in Vietnam is now in doubt.

Father Berrigan, author of the new book *No More Strangers,* is one of the best-known priests active in the interracial apostolate. He is also a pacifist—which in the political lexicon of many Newburghers is not significantly different from the word "Communist." (Newburgh's problem with the radical right became clear in the welfare dispute two years ago, and in the adventures of City Manager Joseph Mitchell, now of the White Citizens Council.) Early in February, the priest joined his brother, Father Daniel Berrigan, S.J., and 500 other clerics, writers and professors in a declaration of conscience pledging complete non-cooperation with the war in Vietnam. He has agitated for U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam on the grounds that "I could not live with myself otherwise . . . I cannot stand by while our nation risks another—and perhaps final—major war. Further I don't believe we can pose as religious leaders or men of principle unless we are willing to take a public stand during times of crisis."

The risk that Father Berrigan ran in taking an unpopular stand, in the light of conscience, is now clear. Letters and phone calls to the Josephite college asked that the priest be silenced, some on the grounds that Father Berrigan's pacifism was discrediting his work for racial justice, others on the grounds that both were aspects of an encompassing Communist plot. Complaints about the "Red" on the faculty poured in to the rector. The Newburgh *Times Herald* reported financial threats against the college, as well as a threat to talk the parents of college seminarians into withdrawing their sons because of the "Communist" professor.

A sad affair. Not so much because of the mania of Newburghers, but because the Josephite order has by its transfer of Father Berrigan capitulated to their threats. This is a familiar reflex among religious orders: to quell disturbances by simply shipping a controversial priest out of town. But as in the Griffin case, it is peace bought at the price of justice. Any attempt to silence Father Berrigan would be a more serious injustice, and one the Josephites would do well to avoid.

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ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

GROUND RULES FOR WAR

In his Easter Message Pope Paul appealed for "reasonable negotiations" and "constructive collaboration" in Vietnam. More recently in his second encyclical, *Mense Maio,* he warned that we "see repeated the dangerous phenomenon of recourse to arms, instead of negotiations, to settle the disputes of opposing parties. . . . We beg all who hold responsibility in public life not to remain deaf to the unanimous desire of mankind, which wants peace. We ask that they do all in their power to preserve the peace that is threatened, and continue at all times to foster and encourage conversations and negotiations at all levels, that the dangerous resort to force with all its lamentable consequences, material, spiritual and moral, may be halted."

There is, of course, no simple way to apply this or any other papal message. The Pope must speak to the whole Church, to the whole world; he does not offer a specific prescription intended only for the United States, or even for the West. It takes two to make peace, and the Soviet bloc is unlikely to be much influenced by the Pope's thoughts on peace unless they can be used for propaganda purposes.

This is not to say, though, that the encyclical should be ignored. *Mense Maio* may not be easy to apply, but I don't think it can be dismissed as a venture in triviality just the same. And to begin with I think we might search our own rather than the Russian or Chinese conscience in this matter.

I am no pacifist but when I read or hear the views of some of the hard-line hawks, I am tempted in that direction. I cannot understand the assumption that what is wrong for our opponents becomes right if we practice it. I cannot understand why unilateral military action by the Communists represents a threat to world peace when the Communists engage in it but becomes a blow for common sense and world equilibrium when we do it, as in the Dominican Republic.

In an effort to run a good magazine, we at COMMONWEAL explore thoroughly every view of all of the editors; if this is necessary to achieve balance in a magazine, why should President Johnson cut down the voices he hears on Vietnam to Rusk, McNamara and Bundy, as the press reports he has? I grant that a stray dove in the midst of the hawks might be time-consuming and even confusing, but unless the Administration is to claim infallibility, should it not welcome a variety of viewpoints?

I don't need any Administration lectures on the dangers of Communist infiltration; I know from personal experience how deadly Communist intrigue can be, in any organization. But if every organization that once had Communists in it were condemned out of hand, there wouldn't be a labor union or liberal group or civil rights organization left in the country. And if the very presence of Communists in any Latin American revolution is going to be taken as proof that they are in command, the United States will be committed from now on to backing every military junta going.

I support the war in South Vietnam. But this does not mean we can close our eyes to everything that is being done in our name in that tortured country. I know the Communist Vietcong practice terrorist tactics; does this mean we should do the same thing in return? Does their savagery justify our own? I think not, whether this is napalm bombing that wipes out whole villages or standing by silently while the South Vietnamese repay torture for torture.

This is not to say that we should not fight for South Vietnam. We should—hard. But we can not ignore the question of means—we can not reduce ourselves to the level of the enemy. And this for "practical" as well as moral reasons.

What do we in the West have to offer the world but an idea—an idea of decency, and justice, and law? So far, let's face it, we are failing miserably to get that idea across in Asia. The badly outnumbered Vietcong already control most of the countryside; we need to offer some kind of positive alternative. The truth is that we are fighting a new kind of war in Vietnam, and so far we have not learned how to do it. Until we do learn, the tide will run against us in Asia—and in Latin America, for that matter.

What will it take to turn the tide? I have no magic answer. I know it will take military strength—there is no use kidding ourselves on that score. But guerrilla warfare is political warfare, and it can be met effectively only by political as well as military counterattack. The U.S. is willing to throw in plenty of military hardware and, if worst comes to worst, American men. So far, though, we don't really know how to wage political warfare. One way *not* to go about it, I suggest, is by trying to justify the tactics of terror or the unilateral use of force whenever we feel our interests are threatened.

JAMES O'GARA

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EDITH SITWELL

Holding court among straw men

ALAN PRYCE-JONES

When I think of Edith Sitwell I think of a particular evening at Renishaw twenty years ago. The war had lately ended, and I had that afternoon been demobilized at a military depot in the neighborhood. Osbert Sitwell had therefore asked my wife and myself to spend the night, on our way back to London and civilian life.

Renishaw is a vast house on the edge of coalfields. The flares glimmer through blackened trees, and an oil film seeps, not only onto the lake waters but into bathrooms indoors. Or would, if there had been bathrooms. At the time of which I speak, progress had been excluded from Renishaw. There was no electric light, no heating, apart from a defiant oil-stove in our immense bedroom, and washing was rigidly limited to the jug and basin order unless one were to pursue a bath down endless corridors, candle in hand, keeping, on Edith's instructions, an eye open for ghosts.

I still remember the excellence of the dinner. There were the four of us only; yet, dinner over, Edith announced, "Tonight we shall sit in the ballroom." And when the two men joined the two women, there she was, seated on a kind of throne illuminated by altar candles, and knitting, very slowly, with needles almost umbrella-sized, a stair-carpet.

I asked what it was. "It is for the troops," she said, turning her strange profile, like the map of some exotic seaboard, towards me, and stabbing at the wool with a hieratic gesture.

Outside the circle of the candles the room was totally black. And it is thus I still see her: to some extent a stage presence, to some extent absurd; always, in her own mind, enthroned, and always the lighted center of a dark, and probably hostile, ghost-ridden circumference.

These were her great days. Not more than ten years before this she had been treated by press and critics alike as a freak, along with her brothers and T. S. Eliot. The first public performance of *Façade,* in 1923, had set the note. Edith was accorded at best a butterfly talent, a quick verbal iridescence which matched such fashionable pleasures of the moment as the Chauve Souris players, saved from Bolshevik Russia, and Poulenc's ballet *Les Biches.* The Sitwells as a trio were still suspect. They made jokes, they were disrespectful to the old—"such a worry to poor Sir George and Lady Ida"—they had altogether too good a time of it.

But by 1945 Edith had greatly extended her range as a poet and even those—like the critics of *Scrutiny*—who had unkindly suggested that the family legend belonged to the history of publicity rather than of literature, were forced to take her seriously. Later the tide turned once more. As she became old, young critics chose to be increasingly severe. They saw the tics, the occasional sillinesses, and they overlooked the real talent which had steadily expanded from the publication of *Gold Coast Customs* on.

One of the reasons for this was the reluctance of their elders to apply any rigorous critical standards to Edith's work. They dreaded the tedious consequences of doing so. She suffered from a degree of persecution mania, and anything less than total praise aroused the most irritating side of her character. Letters were dis-

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patched to the papers, allies were drummed up, stuffed cats and abusive telegrams sent whizzing towards the offender. Reviewers and critics used therefore to beg off. When I was a London editor I always had the greatest difficulty in persuading anybody to refer to her except in terms of total praise (if I addressed myself to one of the faithful) or vituperation (if I went outside the magic circle).

Circle of Sycophants

She inherited from her parents the need to surround herself with sycophants. For years she lived at a London club, the members of which watched her social life, day by day, with the apprehensive bewilderment of house-sparrows spying on a cardinal bird. There she sat, in a deep chintz armchair, clad in robes of vaguely Tudor cut, and alight with amethysts. The guests were no less strange: Madame Piffe, toothless and mauve of cheek, old Mrs. Maugre, on in her nineties, who could tell your sign of the zodiac by looking at you, Albert Comstock the anthropologist, who seemed to have four rows of teeth, a few apple-cheeked wives of minor poets, one or two celebrities like Roy Campbell and Stephen Spender: all united by the wish to make a success of the occasion, in spite of the stares and the really extraordinary food. I used to remember how both she and her brothers had laughed at their parents for building round themselves just such a court of straw men and straw women.

I also remembered how much livelier her life had been when she lived, newly escaped from home, in a walk-up apartment in Bayswater. This, I think, was her moment. There was something deeply appealing about a thirty-year-old waif, living with her governess, angular, shy, utterly unworldly, and taking her pleasure with the English language like the moonlit swimmer in a warm sea, showering phosphorus with every stroke.

She was never a creature of the sun. The moon, cold and odd, was her affinity, although it was of the sun that she wrote. Did she know anything much of ordinary human preoccupations, such as love and hunger? I doubt it, although we were told at the time that "love" would cover as well as any other word her feeling for the painter Pavel Tchelitchew. It is strange, therefore, that so lunar a being should have inspired so much genuine affection in others.

She was immensely kind, though. Once, I recall, she rebuked me for printing the work of a critic who, she thought, wrongly, was hostile to her. She called him every name under the sun—and her lexicon of vituperation was choice. I explained patiently that he had a wife and several children to support, and that as a result he over-wrote, in order to grind out a little more cash. Her mood changed at once. "Poor man," she said. "I had no idea. Would fifty pounds help?" And she reached for the checkbook.

Her eye for talent was sharp. Dylan Thomas and Denton Welch were only two of the many whom she unearthed before the world had wind of them. Woe betide talent, however, if it belonged to another woman-writer. Christina Rossetti she allowed: talent, there, was at a safe distance. Novelists, also, might do, whatever sex they belonged to. But towards women who were also contemporary poets she latterly behaved like a dog with a bone: her growls shook all Central London should they chance to trot by.

She could be funny. She could also be quite wonderfully unfunny, without every suspecting as much. Her talent was in many ways that of a brilliantly perceptive child, and a child's idea of a joke is notoriously chancy.

Since she possessed no humor at all she was a most erratic judge of her own work. There are few more useless approaches to criticism than her highly subjective assessments of the influence of vowel-sounds and consonantal patterns on the imagination. Her prose-writing, anyway, was for the most part a gesture of pot-boiling. She lay in bed—her brother Osbert once said to me, "I hope the doctors don't tell Edith to rest more. She can't"—and endlessly excerpted passages from wide and erratic reading. These were bundled together with an eye, above all, to the picturesque. It was as though a latter-day Burton were writing *The Anatomy of Melancholy* all over again. The effect was

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WILBERT SNOW

TO A BEREAVED MOTHER

He will come back in little ways at times
When you are busy with some menial task
That seems important till his spirit chimes
Its presence in your room. Your eyes will ask
"Are you all right, dear Stephen? Since you left
The world has lost the fullness of its bloom,
And we have found it since we were bereft
As barren as a house without a room
In which one can relax and feel at ease —
There is no ease for us with you away;
We think about your gifts and braveries,
And long to have you back with us the way
You were before Death chilled our hearts with fears."
Then he will vanish, leaving you in tears.

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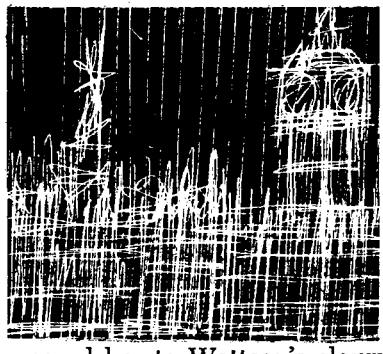
that, although her admonitions certainly helped to restore the fallen reputations of Swinburne and his like, her critical notebooks are almost unreadable.

It is as a poet alone that she is likely to be remembered. Not, I think, chiefly as the prophetic poet she believed herself to be, but as the builder of much exquisite poetic filigree. In the world of Daisy and Lily, of Jane, tall as a crane, of the *ombrelles* and creaking rain and the sprigged muslin waterfalls, she reigns with Gothic dignity.



I once compared her to Watteau's clown, Le Grand Gilles: white, despairing, physically memorable. Her most deliberate grotesquerie always concealed something of the clown's sadness, as though she belonged, both in art and life, to the world of the *commedia dell'arte*. Much of the petulance which increasingly possessed her was due to a clown's loneliness. Other people had to meet her on her own terms; she was barely aware of theirs.

This loneliness accounts, in large part, for her conversion, at 68, to Catholicism. Her religious instinct was largely poetic in feeling. Certainly she never allowed the Church any role except that of confirming her own intuitions. Like the strict framework of a sonnet, it gave shape to an inner life which would have been much the same without it.

Catholicism also made sense of a strange paradox in her nature. She assumed an almost papal infallibility in small things, she made a parade of vanity, she greatly liked wearing a martyr's crown. But in herself she was charmingly humble. The public gestures were there to cover up a profound diffidence in private feeling.

At her best she could be delightfully, childishly, gay. I have said that among the celebrities who came to her were Roy Campbell and Stephen Spender—two of the rare men of talent to be found at her table. They could not, however, be found there together because of a row which the combative Campbell had forced upon Spender.

One day Edith rang me up in agitation. I was to come to luncheon, and she had just remembered that I didn't know Roy, who was aware, however, of my friendship for his enemy. I suggested coming another day. "No," said Edith. "Come. But leave it to me to help matters out." Accordingly, in some trepidation, I went, to be greeted by Roy Campbell with a scowl. Edith remembered that, having been a sergeant in the first world war, Campbell had a strongly developed sense of military hierarchy. Accordingly, she took the bull by the horns. "Roy, I don't think you know Colonel Pryce-Jones." The sergeant put down his cocktail, as though about to salute. For the rest of the meal, Edith never missed an opportunity of bringing me into the talk by saying, "Colonel, just remind us . . ." or "Colonel, do give us your private opinion of Rommel as a fighting commander." I was treated, then and thereafter, with the utmost respect by my *vis-a-vis*.

We quarreled once or twice, she and I: she with me, not I with her. The cause was always literary. Why did I praise Kathleen Raine? Why would I not review Edith's collected poems myself, in order to preserve her from an enemy? A very long, hand-written letter would arrive, by courier not mail, from Italy, rehearsing my fault. And then we would meet, and it would all blow over in a second. Tensions and minute dramas took the place in her life of a domestic rhythm. They assured her she was still alive.

Unluckily she came to record her experience of life too late. *Taken Care Of*, her posthumous autobiography, shows her at her silliest, though it is not without its wintry gleams of poetry and wit. The Edith her friends loved had long been dead. Her gift, like the memory of her Delphic voice and her infinitely drawn-out, sad presence, draped like a Chartres statue in Lent —even the eyes were as if behind veils—obstinately refuse to die.

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NANCY PRICE

THE COMMON EMPEROR

There you float on your heartbeat wings again,
butterfly, from a winter whose least breath
cracked stone. Where did you fold your fan,
small Common Emperor, in that cold death;
and what law waivered aside for you
who wear silk tenuous as a soul?
The lightest touch pierces your armor through,
hardly a fossil captures your shadow whole;
yet you ride March, weathered and threadbare
as a flag on a stormed hill. By your shabby wings,
small Common Emperor, I have come to swear
uncommon things.

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TAKING DICKENS SERIOUSLY

Partner of Dostoevsky?

BERNARD McCABE

"Mrs. MacStinger resorted to a great distance every Sunday morning to attend the ministry of the Reverend Melchizedech Howler, who, having been one day discharged from the West India Docks on a false suspicion (got up expressly against him by the general enemy) of screwing gimlets into puncheons, and applying his lips to the orifice, had announced the destruction of the world for that day at ten in the morning, and opened a front parlor for the reception of ladies and gentlemen of the Ranting persuasion, upon whom, on the first occasion of their assemblage, the admonitions of the Reverend Melchizedech had produced so powerful an effect, that, in their rapturous performance of a sacred jig, which closed the service, the whole flock broke through into a kitchen below, and disabled a mangle belonging to one of the fold."

This sort of brilliantly comic writing (it's from *Dombey and Son*) is the Dickens we all know, the extravagance hovering on the edge of fantasy yet hitting off with perfect accuracy a clear view of human absurdities—and all done with a fluent generosity and humanity that is irresistibly appealing.

There are other very familiar aspects of Dickens. We also know well the Dickens who makes angry protests about Prisons, Parliaments or the Poor Law, the Dickens who champions the underdog and sides with the oppressed against their Victorian oppressors, the kind-hearted, though sometimes rather simple-minded moralist, who can be trusted to come down in a large generous way upon the side of human decency. And of course there's also the richly sentimental Dickens, ever willing to lavish the copious rhetoric of pathos upon births and marriages and deaths, to exploit the more obvious human emotions in floods of tears.

That is the man-in-the-street's Dickens. But in recent years another, more sophisticated version has established itself, at least in academic and critical circles. Attention is more and more concentrated on the later, "darker" novels—*Bleak House, Little Dorrit, Our Mutual Friend*—and the old easy-going story-teller is transformed into the partner of Dostoevsky and Kafka. Ever since Edmund Wilson published his highly influential essay, "The Two Scrooges," some twenty years ago, critics have been seizing the opportunity to "take Dickens seriously," that is, to find twentieth-century reasons for admiring him.

It has been fashionable recently to discover divided minds, "alien visions," among many of the great Victorians. Such solidly confident figures as Tennyson and Browning now appear with deep internal contradictions, fundamentally hostile to their age beneath the apparent complacent acceptance. Edmund Wilson, who has alway been particularly successful with psychological biography as a way of illuminating the artist's work, uses the method to establish Dickens as a writer with a divided mind. The key to Dickens is the trauma he suffered at the age of twelve, the famous "blacking-bottle" episode he took such pains to conceal, or half-conceal. Dickens felt that his parents had betrayed him, and despaired. The writer's whole career was "an attempt to digest these early shocks."

Insights Are "Modern"

So two Scrooges exist side by side in Dickens. One is the jolly Aristophanic chuckler of Christmas morning; the other the malevolent misanthrope of Christmas Eve. Although the impulses of the first Scrooge are powerful and persistent, and more and more as his art matured, Dickens searched for and discovered means to act out imaginatively the obsessions of the darker Scrooge, with imprisonment, darkness, violence, murder juxtaposed to the jolly laughter. Dickens' insights into human behavior in fact are "modern" in their complexity, and can be taken seriously in a modern way. So his last, unfinished work, *Edwin Drood*, is, in it's characteristically evasive fashion, Dostoevsky, studying "the states of mind which are the results of a secession from society: the contemptuous will to spurn and crush confused with the impulse toward human brotherhood,

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the desire to be loved twisted tragically with the desire to destroy and to kill."

Moreover, Dickens is not only prophetically modern in his preoccupations, but also in his literary methods. He is a symbolist in the modern sense. Everybody knows (cannot help noticing) that Dickens makes play with the sea and the fog and the river and (in *Our Mutual Friend*) the dust-heaps in a symbolic sort of way. Wilson saw him using them as Joyce or Mann uses symbols, in a calculated, sustained, and organic manner, to express ever-expanding burdens of meaning.

Among modern Dickens critics, Wilson's tips have been taken up with great enthusiasm. Inspired by his pioneering spirit a whole generation of commentators has devoted itself to the exploration of Dickens as a dark prophet and symbolist poet. And as a result, Dickens criticism has been carrying on in the same high intellectual manner as Joyce criticism, Mann criticism, Kafka criticism.

Steven Marcus' widely acclaimed recent book, *Dickens, from Pickwick to Dombey* (Basic Books, $5.95), is the latest example in this tradition. Here we find a Dickens "deeply divided" between affirmation and condemnation of the world around him. His literary methods are characterized as "modern"—his novels take shape "largely under the pressure of a progressive returning into consciousness of urgent and crucial events in his past life, and do so by transforming deeply personal emotions into images and ideas."

It is a very clever book. Marcus deploys a fine command of background material, the collected letters, the speeches, the journalism, together with what might loosely be called a Freudian biographical approach, to illuminate Dickens' creative concerns. His book is original in its focus on the early novels, largely neglected by earlier critics of this type, and makes valuable comments on the relationship between Dickens' transforming imagination of his private history—his "search for a self"—and his imagination of Victorian society as a whole. Marcus makes it clear that the two preoccupations coincided much sooner in Dickens' literary career than is generally suggested, that the novelist's complexities began early.

Losing Touch with Dickens

Much of this analysis is extremely useful. And yet doubts arise. Dickens is to be taken very seriously; even *Pickwick*: "No novel could move further than *Pickwick Papers* toward asserting not only that the Kingdom of God is within each man but that it is possible to establish something that resembles the Kingdom of God on earth." What's going on? Suddenly we have lost touch with the Dickens of *Pickwick* (just as we lose touch when Edmund Wilson turns *Edwin Drood* into *Crime and Punishment*). I mean we have lost touch with the experience of reading Dickens, and moved into strange, interesting, but surely irrelevant spheres. It's not only that we don't want to take Mr. Pickwick *this* seriously, but that we are persuaded Dickens does not want us to either, and has taken steps to make this clear. The trouble for serious Dickens critics is that, moving from the jolly *Pickwick* through the darker *Dombey* to the somber *Drood*, it's never easy to be sure when or if Dickens wants us to take him seriously. Behind all Marcus' strenuous ingenuities, the pointing of parallelisms, the elaboration of symbolic structures, there lies this nagging doubt. That very serious critic F. R. Leavis once threw up his hands about Dickens and serious engagement; having acknowledged the novelist's Shakespearean genius-with-words he could only dismiss him as the "great entertainer." For the truth is that the Dickens we all know all the time behaves in ways that make it very difficult for us to accept him as a great and serious novelist in the way that we accept other great and serious novelists.

This point is made—"there is a fundamental oddity about Dickens' art which makes his novels hard to judge by ordinary standards"—in an extraordinarily interesting book by another American critic, Robert Garis, which has just appeared in England, and will shortly be published in this country: *The Dickens Theatre* (Oxford University Press).

George Orwell once remarked that when reading Dickens he was always aware of a particular face behind the page—"laughing, with a touch of anger behind the laughing . . . the face of a man generously angry." Steven Marcus has an interesting phrase in his discussion of *Martin Chuzzlewit* about the presence of the novelist in the book, "his disciplined, magisterial sensibility, acting as a kind of deity, freely creating and controlling the experience he imposes on his readers." Robert Garis has a much more radical and more subtle approach. Reading Dickens, he suggests, we are constantly aware of the artist *deliberately* present behind the page. Dickens' language, incessantly drawing attention to itself, draws attention to its creator, too: "The machinery, the 'works,' that produces the expressive effects is puzzlingly, almost embarrassingly visible. . . . Nor is there the slightest suggestion of an attempt to hide the presence of the artificer: our sense of his presence does not gradually disappear as we become aware of the objects his language is

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embodying, the feelings it is evoking, though these objects and feelings are unquestionably embodied and evoked. . . . And if we continue reading with pleasure it is partly because we enjoy watching the contriver at his work."

The Rabbit is Interesting

If we are to read Dickens with full understanding we must recognize this fact and come to terms with it. What happens in a Dickens novel is a series of "performances," conscious, deliberate and successful performances, that demand, and receive our applause. All novelists create illusions of reality, but Dickens does it in a special way, that draws attention to the illusionist. It's like when we watch a conjuror, says Garis, the rabbit is real and interesting, but what we admire most is the way the man produces it.

Dickens' art is theatrical. Can we therefore take him seriously? Only by deliberately suspending the usual kinds of demand we make of great novelists. In *War and Peace, Emma, Middlemarch,* the artist disappears, the books have their own internal organic life which seems to take over (in fact, if we become aware of the author calling attention to himself, or of his will interposing itself between us and the imagined life that he has created, we feel that something has gone wrong). But Dickens is *always* there (delighting in himself.) Again, the novel is traditionally about human beings and their relationships. Great novels reveal to us in various ways the workings of their characters' inner life. But Dickens' characters have no inner life. They are all performers, flamboyant actors on the stage of Dickens' private theater.

For Garis the Dickens theater can be taken seriously. When he speaks of the theatrical he is not, for example, inviting us to treat Dickens in terms of that tiresome current taste for "high camp." Dickens' art, although it operates very differently from Tolstoy's or George Eliot's (or Dostoevsky's for that matter), is equally an art of moral awareness, with its roots in real life and common experience. To explain what he means, Garis points to certain "theatrical" aspects of our real life relationships with other people.

We are all familiar with two kinds of performers, people whom, in a sense, we don't take seriously, people with whose inner life we expect no contact. First there are those people who deliberately "play a role," who appeal quite consciously for our cooperation in their act; the "brilliant talker," for example. We don't suspend our judgment, moral or aesthetic, before such performers, but we collaborate with them. We accept that in our relationships with them no "inner life" will be revealed, but value their show. Most of the time Dickens the artist is such a performer. Second there is the kind of performer who is deeply unaware of himself, who does not listen to himself, who "has not the slightest concern about the effect he is making on people."

Such people are performers willy-nilly, in the sense that they are notably uninhibited, and they present their personalities to us with unusual vividness and completeness. Again no "inner life" is revealed. Such people may bore us or repel us, but also, Garis suggests, we may deliberately constitute ourselves their audience, and we may take a conscious pride in so doing. We don't take them seriously in the usual way, but our reaction to them may be alert and sensitive, and it may involve "a high degree of moral and emotional well-being."

Alertness of Response

This is how Dickens wants us to react to the characters in his theater. They are the subjects of his serious art. And his performance as he mimics them, incredibly copious and rich in its inventiveness, exacts from us or perhaps develops in us a special alertness of response. (Garis would say, I think, that an attentive response of this kind immediately indicates how irrelevant to *Pickwick* is talk about the Kingdom of God.)

Altogether I find this attitude (which is developed and presented much more subtly and fluently than I have been able to communicate here) a fresh and stimulating way of approaching the Dickens problem. Especially interesting is the manner in which Garis combines deeply aesthetic and deeply moral appreciations. He sees style in Dickens as "a pleasure in itself," but he balances this aesthetic concern with a concern for art as moral awareness. And the most attractive aspect of his book is the sensitive and balanced way in which he exemplifies what he means by such language. His study is in a sense itself creative as it enacts for us a series of moral and aesthetic insights, not only into literature but into human behavior. Some of the

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most striking chapters are devoted to exploring and identifying what in terms of art the Dickens novel is *not*, offering a wide-ranging and severely testing commentary on the greatest art, non-theatrical art, art as "self-developing organism." Here his interpretations of significant passages in Tolstoy and George Eliot and Jane Austen are models of discreetly intelligent sensitivity. So are his widely-chosen analogies in the other arts: poetry, music, ballet, the theater itself.

System vs. Human Spontaneity

The last chapters of *The Dickens Theatre* deal with individual novels, once more the late novels. His general thesis about *Bleak House, Hard Times, Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend* is not in itself surprisingly new; Garis notes that they are about the way System, predetermined, routine, mechanical, "anti-life" System, falls blightingly upon natural human spontaneity. But his special approach affords many valuable critical insights. *Bleak House* and *Hard Times* are, in his terms, triumphs of theatrical rhetoric; *Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend*, brilliantly effective though their theater often is, suffer from Dickens' attempts, through the characterizations of Arthur Clenman and Bella Wilfer, to do what his art was not concerned with doing, to render the inner life dramatically. *Great Expectations* is the great masterpiece, and it produces some very original criticism. We are still in the Dickens theatre, but (using what is essentially a Freudian approach) Garis suggests that here, and here only, Dickens through the impersonation of Pip achieves (unconsciously) a deeply and organically imagined criticism of life.

Garis' absorbing and important book is a criticism of life as well as of literature, and in some ways it is (almost oppressively) disturbing as well as stimulating. There is no doubt that seeing Dickens as performer provides an invaluable tool when we are face to face with those constant strange shiftings of tone in his novels. And probably to adopt this stance towards them is only to rediscover what must have been the attitude of many of Dickens' contemporaries. Yet the attitude calls for considerable athleticism on the part of the reader, quite a strenuous readjustment. Garis' suggestions about performers in real life are similarly enlightening but also disturbing in their implications. In both realms large demands are made upon our intelligence and on our tact.

Dickens is rather like Shakespeare. Matthew Arnold might also have said of him "Others abide our question, thou art free!" Certainly before that seemingly inexhaustible flow of creative energy we are tempted simply to lie back and enjoy. One great virtue of Robert Garis' book is that it points the way towards intelligently full and active participation in the novels—towards taking them really seriously. Another virtue is that as he points the way we are always being moved back to the particular Dickens experience, back, so to speak, to Mrs. MacStinger's sacred jig, and to the mangle.

The world tomorrow

PRITCHETT'S NEW YORK

JAMES FINN

Oh, who owns New York?
Oh, who owns New York?
Oh, who owns New York,
The people say?

Despite the bravado of the school song, C-O-L-U-M-B-I-A is an inadequate answer to the question. But it is a question worth asking, for the nearer we are to a satisfactory answer the nearer we are to understanding present-day New York and, possibly, the city of tomorrow.

By raising the materialistic question of ownership I have lent support, I realize, to V. S. Pritchett's assessment of New Yorkers. But it is one of the real virtues of *New York Proclaimed* (by V. S. Pritchett, photographs by Evelyn Hofer, Harcourt, Brace & World, $15) that Pritchett himself has given at least partial

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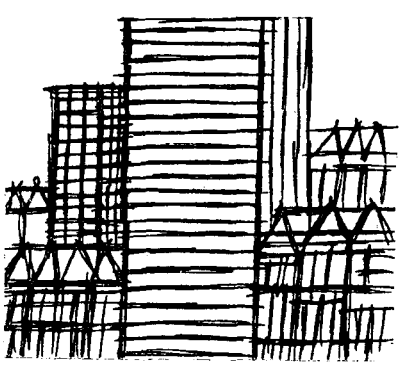
answers to this question for times past, and it is because he has not attempted a contemporary answer to the question that this admirable book is born an anachronism.

Still the book has those solid and generous virtues that one associates with the name of V. S. Pritchett. Given the criterion that it be a foreigner who is commissioned to write about New York, he is a natural but inspired choice. He has over the years written some of the best literary criticism on either side of the Atlantic; it is marked by intellectual toughness, by an independent judgment equally free of faddish systems and personal quirkiness, by an approach that allows both the sharp intuitive insight and the sustained examination that leads to a persuasive and satisfying generalization, by a prose style that engages and guides the reader's interest without the constabulary admonitions and sharp knuckle-rapping that are the distinction of so much contemporary criticism. His short stories confirm what one might have inferred, that he is a fine craftsman, observant and perceptive, to whom the quotidian life yields up much of its secrets. As a non-reader of travel pieces, I cannot compare what Pritchett has done with the best of other writers, but his accounts are informative, persuasive and pleasant.

It is this combination of talents which keeps *New York Proclaimed* from being simply another account of the city, its inevitable destination the helpless library, the New York section of second-hand bookstores and the shelves, stacks and trunks of those collectors who acquire every work on New York with the mania of an autograph hound.



For such assertions the best support is example. Anyone who has visited Manhattan will have his own comment about how the shape of its life is controlled by the structure of its buildings. As one coming anew into the city Pritchett comments: "In your new life the vertical dimension is certain to prevail over the horizontal; you will be going up and down oftener than you are going along. In fact, suppose you could remove all the buildings from Manhattan but leave the people exactly where they were, you would see the fantastic sight of people sitting high up in the air or whizzling upwards or downwards; very few would be on the earth."

"In fact, suppose" is a fine introduction to this enlightening blend of fact and fantasy.

Of the notorious New York summers Pritchett remarks that they turn "the city into a place where one is reduced to a state of desuetude. One is an ominous collection of sweat glands and guts, a subhuman blob in the jungle of morose thoughts. The buildings slam back the heat at each other. As you walk past the little air-conditioning boxes on the street level, you feel hot air shoot out at you; the glass buildings seem to have been madly constructed to create refraction—iced people inside heating the hot ones outside."

As an example of the dramatic that is everywhere present in New York, Pritchett mentions the little hill that crests on Ninety-sixth Street. Looking south down Park Avenue, the eye was once borne for mile after undulating mile, excited by the narrow long vista. It can travel the same path still, but it is now abruptly stopped by the massive Pan Am building which has brutalized the Avenue. But if one turns his back on this view and looks north, one sees "with astonishment, wide open sky unsliced by very high buildings; the wide vale of Harlem, as red as cinders in the August fire, lit by the virulent flashing of car bumpers in the sunlight. On damp days the place lay like a mud flat in the fume of a low city."

A Palpable Awareness

Such descriptions can do more than merely inform the uninformed: they can focus and sharpen the already existent perception of the New Yorker; they make more palpable an awareness of the city that is seldom entirely submerged for the New Yorker, that is a constant part of his emotional life.

The narrative and descriptive flow is laced, occasionally with an epigrammatic, sometimes astringent, observation. "It is the poor who rob the poor." Not an original reflection but it illuminates the hardship of the immigrants who streamed into the country to be met by their immediate predecessors, oppressed and destitute, who turned on the easiest prey they could find. "Time has persuaded our affections." Undeniably true. Here, as elsewhere, we continually learn to value what the critical eye of other years disdained or condemned. It must make us cautious in dismissing the new, harsh constructions that now materialize in the city almost overnight. (But could there ever be enough time to

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turn our affections on the Pan Am Building?) "City life is for masochists." This, of course, will meet with instant agreement by those who detest the city. But, as usual, the context is all, and this comes from a man who had just written: "On One Hundred and Fourth Street on the West Side I used to have the sensation of being flayed alive all night by knives whipping down Riverside Drive; it was not disagreeable."

In discussing the forces that "have created or are creating a race and a city like no other in the world," Pritchett acknowledges, as one inevitably must, the importance of the great migrations—the Irish, the eastern Jewish, the Negro, Italian, and Puerto Rican. To the familiar history he brings his own insights. Of the Southern Irish who fled the potato famines of the mid-nineteenth century he writes:

"The strange thing was that the Irish peasant ceased to be a peasant once he got to America. Perhaps he had never been a peasant, in the European sense, in Ireland itself. . . . Above all, no one had been lonely in Ireland—the cult of loneliness and separation in Ireland dates from the emigrations—and loneliness was the terrible quality of the American wild and the newly formed cities. So they huddled in the slums. Used to defeat and repression, a large number became stagnant, took to drink, or died; they became a visible secret society in any country where they settled, in dereliction corrupt but charitable, in self-realization belligerent, of high intelligence, and endowed with an unmistakable style. Their most remarkable quality, when one thinks of all that has happened to the race in history, and to that famine generation in particular, was that they might die of destitution but that their race was unkillable and could rise, particularly in single figures, to superb achievement. And if in New York they corrupted the government of the city, one has to ask how just and how corrupt the city already was. It has more than once been said that the Irish made hard, canny, Anglo-Saxon America cheerful. I remember an Irish-American priest telling me about his father, who was a ward politician in Chicago. 'He was so corrupt,' he said, 'he would even give an Englishman a job.'"

This brief passage better informs us about the relation between the early Irish and the city than pages from many other writers and it has an immediate relevance to the American Irish of today. Since he has followed a loosely historical approach to the city, Pritchett offers comparable observations on other groups that have moved into the city. In following the growth of the city we see who owns the city—economically, socially, culturally, intellectually. The historical information which Pritchett has ably and conscientiously gathered provides a partial answer—until we reach the present. It is here that the book fails and, failing, leads us to question not Pritchett's achievement, which is real, but the nature of that achievement.

There is, first, a duty to be discharged. The reviewer of a book such as this must comment on the photographs, for ideally they are an integral part of the book and practically they are a reason for the high price. It is almost immediately obvious to the reader that Miss Hofer's photographs do not complement Mr. Pritchett's text. Indeed, they might be said to meet it head on and suffer in the consequence. Where he correctly labels New York a City of Activity, Miss Hofer presents us with frozen architectural wonders, populated only by still figures meant to remind us apparently of the living, moving beings who must at some uncertain time have passed their days here. The buildings, bridges and highways are well done, but Little Italy is inadequately represented by the picture of a little Italian of stocky build and stolid stance, gazing straightforwardly out at one; nor is Chinatown evoked by a little Chinese girl, however sweet. The intention of Miss Hofer is everywhere apparent, consistent, and in its own terms successful. But it is just these terms, of course, that are inappropriate to New York.

A National Problem

The real interest of this book must rest on the merits of Pritchett. As I have tried to make clear, I believe them to be substantial. An essay of this kind is not to be confused with his literary essays, which more consistently engage his interest. This is the kind of thing a professional writer turns to because it is profitable, because it has some interest in itself, and because it may yield by-products that will in time prove quite valuable. In these terms, Pritchett's essay is one of the best. But these familiar terms are simply not sufficient to render up the truth about contemporary New York. Though he speaks of activity and recognizes the loneliness of the city, he misses the restless discontent that permeates the city, that breaks out in senseless violence rather than being channeled into constructive activities that runs through the city from one end to the other, from the helplessly poor to the helplessly rich. It is this discontent which the New York *Herald Tribune* is presently attempting to analyze in its fine series of articles "New York City in Crisis."

"This is a white man's city," says one Negro nurse. But as the *Tribune* points out, 800,000 middle-class whites have fled the city since 1950 and have been replaced by an equal number of Negroes and Puerto

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Ricans, largely unskilled or semi-skilled. Nor is there in this fantastically rich city adequate provision for these new members, in terms of housing, education, or employment. And there seems little prospect for change, as the city adds to the half million now on welfare an ever increasing number. New York is a city which contains almost half the drug addicts in the country, in which the numbers of addicts increase, discussion about them grows and helpful proposals remain unimplemented. New York is a city which is gradually getting choked by its vehicular traffic, in which the subways have become more dangerous, and in which the commuter railroads balance on the edge of bankruptcy and collapse.

One could continue this list of complaints; they all lead to the overwhelming question, "who owns New York?" If ownership implies control there is reason to pursue the question, for New York is a city almost out of control. This should be something of concern to everyone, not only the provincial New Yorker. For our country—and the world—is becoming increasingly urbanized and is destined to continue in this direction. The severe problems which seem today so particular to New York are virulent; tomorrow they will spread and possess more urban areas. They will, that is, unless we recognize them, struggle with them and come up with some feasible solutions. But an essay on New York that ignores such issues must by-pass much that is New York today. It is possible that the terrible title of *New York Proclaimed* was intended to signal to the reader that it intended to do just that. We can accept it as a book that faces the past gracefully and sympathetically, but we must pass on to books that are willing to face the present and contemplate the future.

The art of J. V. Cunningham

POET OF PLAINNESS

RICHARD M. ELMAN

The snow falls
With its inveterate meaning,
And I follow the barbed wire
To trough, to barn, to the house,
To what strangers, what welcome
In the late blizzard of time.

The five books of poetry which have thus far been published by J.V. Cunningham yield very few examples of "inveterate meaning." In each poem meanings have been carefully assigned, specified, complicated, even denied. It is additionally noteworthy that Cunningham has rarely, if ever, used what has been called free verse up until now. But as he uses it above it is as sparse, intense, and scrupulously formal as his writings in the traditional measures. This is a poetry of the dying fall, carefully arranged to strike on the word "time." *To What Strangers, What Welcome,* Cunningham's first small collection in some years, is a lovely Alan Swallow pamphlet of fifteen short poems, printed and bound with fine paper. It would make a lovely gift, a choice manual on the art of poetic diction and versification for the aspiring writer of verse; it is also tough-minded and aware — an example of a personality indistinguishable from its expression in language. When our younger poets look around for models worthy of their imitation, they could benefit greatly by choosing Cunningham, but this does not seem likely. His manner is too skillful to be imitated in a callow way; and there is, after all, something emotionally off-putting about a poet who can compose definitive critical essays in the dispassionate third person about his own writings.

Cunningham's manner of truth-telling may be disturbing, but he is a master of the plain style out of which all variant styles are apt to spring. Like his early mentor, Yvor Winters, he is not a convinced modernist. Again, like Winters, his poetry is as abrasive as his critical writings. There is nothing blunted or politic about Cunningham's satire; it usually goes for the jugular vein. It is poetry of wit, a poetry of allegory and personification as well as metaphor, didactic, syllogistic, but not without strong feelings. In Cunningham's own words:

RICHARD M. ELMAN, *novelist and critic, has contributed articles to various magazines, including* Commentary *and the* Saturday Review.

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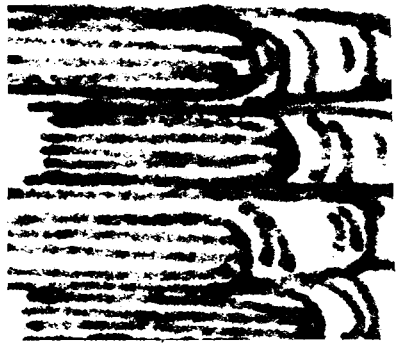
If I love you – as I do –
To the very perfection
Of perfect imperfection,
It's that I care more for you
Than for my feelings for you.

But if self-loathing is one of the dominant emotional responses displayed by such a poetry, there are judg-



ments made about the world which are usually well-aimed. "The poem is the trial," Cunningham has declared. "Experience is defendant, and the jury/Peers of tradition, and *the judge is fury.*" In accord with such a motto – the title of his second book – there has been a never-ending production of certain extremely funny "grub street" epigrams which, although occasionally scurrilous and splenetive, are also a kind of rude justice. Here are a few:

You ask me how *Contempt* who claims to sleep
With every women that has ever been
Can still maintain that women are skin deep?
They never let him any deeper in.

****

Soft found a way to damn me undefended;
I was forgiven who had not offended.

****

After some years *Bohemian* came to this –
This Maenad with hair down and gaping kiss
Wild on the barren edge of under fifty,
She would finance his art if he were thrifty.

Combined with his self-styled professionalism which he has expressed as a "white passion" for "exactitude of statement," his skill with the classical moods and measures, a fervent but lapsed Catholicism, an imagery which alternates between alcoholic bleariness and a desert aridity, the vision of the poet which emerges from the early epigrams is not calculated to make for good public relations, even among the dwindling audience of poets and critics who still read poetry. If they have not been among Cunningham's targets, they are still apt to share widely divergent views on what is a poem. When I showed one aspiring critic his verses, I was told: "Ogden Nash takes more liberties."

I find it rather amusing that Cunningham's short lyrics should be measured in terms of the liberties they take. So, apparently, does Cunningham. In a wonderfully mocking verse written some years back entitled *For My Contemporaries* he justified himself in this manner:

How time reverses
The proud in heart!
I now make verses
Who aimed at art.

But I sleep well.
Ambitious boys
Whose big lines swell
With spiritual noise,

Despise me not!
And be not queasy
To praise somewhat:
Verse is not easy. . .

Whether in verse or prose, when Cunningham writes of what he is about, it is as if it were the "history of a style" which he has defined in its native state as "dry, abstract, tightly formal." But because he is a prolific confessor, he has confessed to many early attempts "to court and possess and at the same time disinterestedly to understand roughly what was then called sensibility . . . the fall of light among the tea cups." The rational part of Cunningham's mind rejected this as "the quest of the opal" which "derives its color and attraction from flaws in the stone" and which, as a consequence, is apt to produce waste "and the perception of waste. . . the ring without the jewel, the promise without the fulfillment." But even in his most passionate commitment to the defense of reason, to the distinction between subject and object, Cunningham admitted that there were values in the quest: "curious accessions of insight and energy, intimations beyond the routine." It is this tension between these two ways of knowing which is not only felt and central but often enough explicit in his poems. In an early *Timor Dei* Cunningham wrote:

Thou didst pervade my being
Like marsh air steeped in brine;
Thou didst invade my seeing
Till all I saw was thine.

But within the same book, in a poem entitled "Reason

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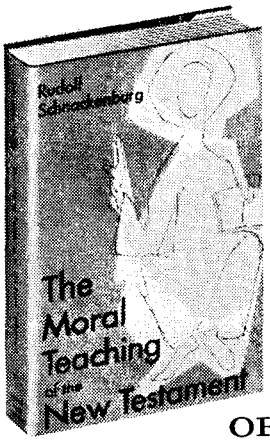

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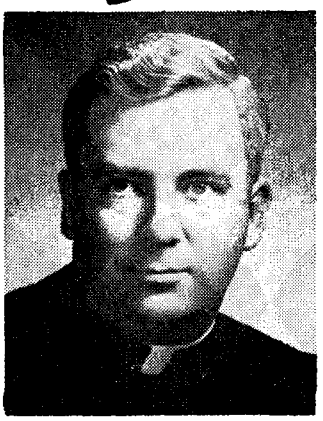

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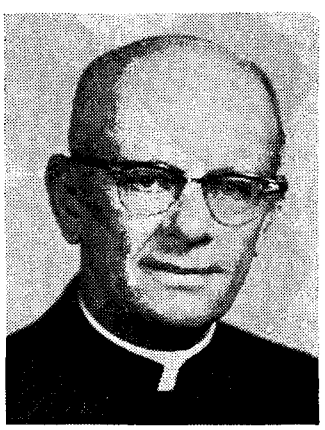

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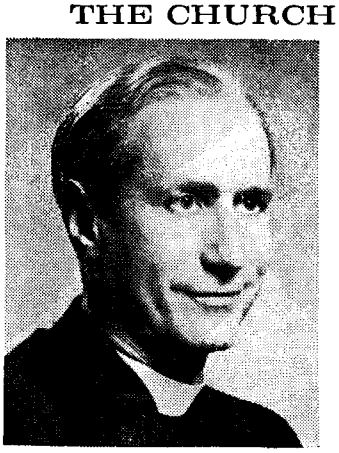

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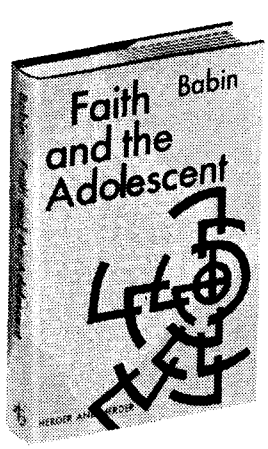
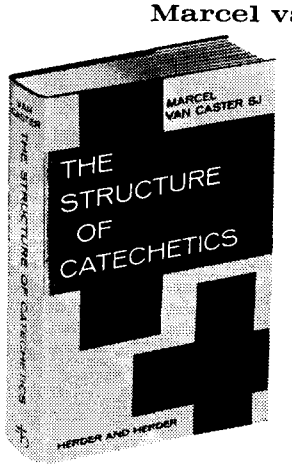


THE STRUCTURE OF CATECHETICS

Marcel van Caster SJ



Designed especially for religious educators, this basic work discusses the fundamentals of catechesis in the light of the current catechetical renewal. Father van Caster treats such topics as the nature of catechetics, its triple function – teaching, formation and initiation – and its various resources: the Bible, tradition, anthropology, sociology and psychology. $4.95

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and Nature," after alluding to the myth of Narcissus who stared into a pond to see his face, Cunningham pointed out:

> If the water
> Concealed it, could he, drowning see it
> better?
>
> I know both what I see
> And what I think, to alter and to be,
> And the vision
> Informs that vision of confusion.

By insisting on the "sullen clarity/of passions in their station, moved by propriety," Cunningham was leaving his verses open to the charge of priggishness. The results were often "cold landmarks for reflection's gaze." His world might have been the mind, but his mind – being of the world – gave off few hints that it was aware of its precarious tenancy. But whenever these hints were present the poetry was of an extremely high order of intelligence, consciousness and formal perfection. Cunningham had said his aim was "to specify the void." Was it only accidental that his most moving lyrics asked questions? In *The Judge is Fury,* Cunningham asked:

> Who knows his will?
> Who knows what mood
> His hours fulfill?
> His griefs conclude?

There followed a brief vivid declaration about the sustenances of illusion before the poem again concluded on questions:

> Who knows what themes,
> What lunar senses,
> Compel his dreams?

There is a haunted quality to Cunningham's mature poetry. It is as if despite a strenuous application of his rational faculties the void has become an abyss "austere/as winter air." Cunningham echoes Dante's *e la sua volontate* but he also asks questions of personal identity: Who are you? Where am I? Who? In one poem confusion gets the better of him; he writes:

> He trembles
> Though the taut face dissembles.
> I know him: I am he.

But, though such reaffirmations of knowing made his vision of the void momentarily coherent, he was never rid of his dreaded questioning. *To What Strangers, What Welcome* is a diary of a journey west, presumably to the dry farm regions of his birth, but the quiet but terrible irony is that the return to the source is outdistanced by the time which is bringing the poet to his own dissolution. Cunningham's perception of this process of time is a kind of refrain to the title poem; time becomes, at last, his "mute exile." Finding in human love "unfulfilled fulfillment," Cunningham argues with himself:

> "We live in the given. Consequence
> And lack of consequence, both fail us.
> Good is what we can do with evil.

But the void remains unspecified, "as much my own as is the thought of death." In the final poem in this allegorical cycle of search and return, the poet sits "in the last warmth/of a New England fall," thinking he is:

> "A premise of identity
> Where the lost hurries to be lost,
> Both in its own best interests
> And in the interests of life."

It is in the latter interest that his poetry must be recommended.

THE TRACK OF THE WOLF

Essays on National Socialism and its Leader, Adolf Hitler

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HARLEM, MON AMOUR

THE SCREEN

Every now and then there comes along a film so good that one wishes it were better. Such a picture is "The Pawnbroker," in which Rod Steiger gives a magnificent performance as Sol Nazerman, a fiftyish Jew who lived through the horrors of a Nazi concentration camp where his wife and children were exterminated, and now humbly doles out small money to "scum"—his customers, the poor, the starving, the depraved, the junkies, the miscreants of East Harlem. Needless to say, this is pretty grim stuff, not only because the leading character in the script, written by David Friedkin and Morton Fine from Edward Lewis Wallant's novel, is a living-dead man who has practically resigned from the human race, but also because the main setting for this lengthy film is New York's Harlem, which that expert photographer Boris Kaufman and director Sidney Lumet have realistically displayed at its squalid worst.

Perhaps "The Pawnbroker" means to say, among many other things, that Harlem today parallels Nazi Germany. Whatever the message, the film is forceful. Although Steiger dominates it as the embittered man ridden by guilt because he survived, Lumet has directed all the actors in his fine cast well, especially Jaime Sanchez, as Sol's breezy Puerto Rican assistant who greatly admires the pawnbroker and hopes to learn the business. It is this lad who finally awakens Sol to the cry of anguish that may be the beginning of his return to life. While their roles are not particularly believable, Geraldine Fitzgerald, as a social worker extending friendship which Sol rejects, and Brock Peters, as a vice boss using Sol's shop as a front for his vicious activities, turn in good performances. And many of the bit players as customers, underworld characters, and Sol's mean, self-centered in-laws add much to the drama and realism.

Director Lumet also uses flashbacks to stunning effect in "The Pawnbroker," flashbacks that are as startling in their past-is-present implications as those in "Wild Strawberries" and "Hiroshima, Mon Amour." A phrase, a sound, a situation in the present may bring back to Sol a remembrance of things past: his pre-pogrom, happy, carefree family; the terrors and suffering of the concentration camp; a review even of woebegone customers who filed through the pawnshop. Some of these

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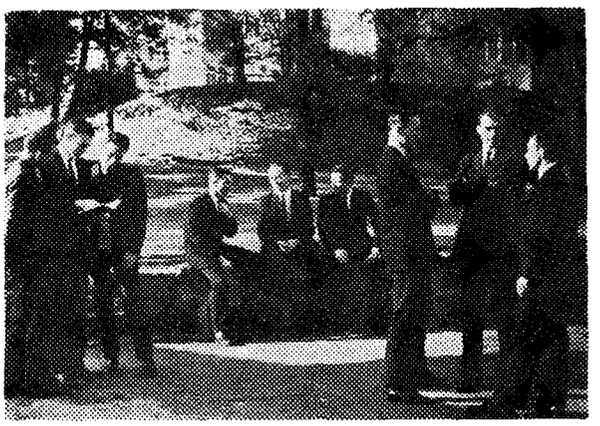

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flashbacks are a complete scene, as when Sol in a jammed subway recalls the crowded prisoners being hauled to the camp; or when the assistant's girl (Thelma Oliver), a Negro prostitute, comes to Sol for money, strips to the waist in offering herself, and forces Sol to remember his own wife who was stripped and raped by Nazis. Most of the flashbacks, however, are done in a real flash as if the remembrance and recall were only a flicker, but enough to remind the misanthrope why he hated all men. Lumet's use of this flash technique is legitimate and fascinating. Unfortunately, however, it is overdone; and the film becomes somewhat arty in a way that detracts from its realism. When we become too aware of technique, we also become suspicious of the repeated naturalistic details and sordid Harlem backgrounds.

Because of its excessive length and repetitions, one may also question other aspects of "The Pawnbroker" —some of its symbols, some of the irrelevant episodes and, most of all, the fact that Sol, in spite of his great suffering, cannot shake off his hatred and cynicism even so many years after his cruel experiences. Some of his attitudes are incredible, as when he tells his assistant that he doesn't believe in God or politics or newspapers. "I only believe in money." Even more unlikely is his answer to his sad, weeping mistress when she phones to say her father is dead: "So bury him!" But in spite of the film's faulty excesses, "The Pawnbroker" succeeds in its absorbing drama and thoughtful themes in making us pay attention to what's wrong today.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG

THE BAD TASTE FACTOR

THE STAGE

The only major opening in the last few weeks has been the New York Mets and their new season. A claque of merry andrews has passed on the suggestion that this comes under the heading of Stage, but I don't really believe it. The Mets are essentially a pseudo-event, a funny team without a single funny player on it, a joke that exists purely in the mind of the fan. The stage is the crowd itself, with its dreams and its bedsheets, and this department doesn't do crowds.

Instead I should like to take advantage of the brief seasonal intermission to discuss one of those problems without a name—call it the bad taste problem. For a few people, maybe 1% of the population, bad taste is no problem at all: they have perfect pitch in clothes, friends, prose, wallpaper, and the good taste not even to worry about it. Another 1% have infallible *bad* taste, bad taste raised to the level of system, and these constitute a pretty serene crowd too. (They are also always the previous tenants of your new apartment.)

But most of us have to concede a large area to uncertainty. We have stupid friends—and we don't even know that they are stupid; we vibrate helplessly to various ugly buildings, interiors, old radio commercials. Left to our own devices, deprived of our leaders, we would probably have no taste at all, in certain areas.

The current distortion of the word "camp" stems from our embarrassment over this fact. High-brows have always been arch about their bad taste, talking about "deliciously bad westerns" and the like, and now they have camp for an umbrella: but really their problem is plain old bad taste, the same bad taste that their stupid brother-in-law Henry wears like a campaign button. Camp in its true sense solves no problems at all; to spot it yourself, without cribbing from someone else's list, requires excellent taste gone a little gamy, which is almost as hard to fake as the real thing.

Before camp came along, the bad-taste brigade (in which most of us have served at one time or another) had to work harder for its excuses. We used to say that we liked things because they were unpretentious, good of their kind, genuine. This was a dignified way out but I'm not sure it was always true. Bad taste is too capricious for such sanctimonious rulings—some of the tunes, some of the movies we liked were pretentious but genuine; others were modestly bogus. No mesh is fine enough to catch this taste, which involves every instinct but the formally-aesthetic.

In human relations, the bad taste factor is something you have to adjust to. One doesn't divide one's friends into Kitsch and camp and genuine folk-art—not because it couldn't be done, but because it would be unmanageable. Life would be intolerably tense if you worried constantly about whether you were liking the best available people every season. Half the population would probably leave home at the age of 5 if taste was a primary consideration; and school would be an unrelieved nightmare. Humanly speaking, we are all surrounded by the equivalents of Coca-Cola ads, Jerry Lewis movies, and Irving Stone books, and have been all our lives.

It is only when we turn to the arts proper that we expect our heavily adulterated taste to become magically perfect. Then we go stiff all over and insist on liking only the best (hoping at the same time that we recognize it); making no allowance for the artistic coun-

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terpart of the stupid friend or the ugly house; assuming in ourselves a degree of aesthetic concentration bordering on the angelic.

Natural bad taste is repressed at a cost, in pleasure, if nothing else, and possibly in receptiveness too. Most theatrical productions, at any rate, provide an overflow of irrelevancies—*fourires*, sentimentalities, etc. —and these are there to be enjoyed. Besides, if people worried less about having perfect taste, they might feel more at home with art—and this might actually lead to an improvement in taste. There would at least be a decline in faking and snobbery and fashion-spotting. There would also be some horrible discoveries. A musical friend of mine found that, under the influence of marijuana, he liked Tchaikovsky. But horrible discoveries are part of an aesthetic education too.

There is no point in blaming the critics for our present stiff caution in face of the arts. This is like blaming the clergy for the state of the laity. It is not the critic's job to say, "This is awful, but you may like it for your own peculiar reasons": his job is to discuss art in terms of its own formal requirements, not to speculate on its non-aesthetic attractions.

Good taste is obviously of first importance, but it can co-exist with a certain amount of its opposite. Anyway, the spectator's task is not to "have good taste" but to experience art: and in this role he is going to make some gorgeous mistakes. If he doesn't (if even a practicing critic doesn't) I assume he is cheating, not opening himself fully to the experience. Because except for the 1%—and perhaps even for them—perfect taste is the next thing to no taste at all. WILFRID SHEED

BOOKS

The intellectuals—a caste or a vague description?

Communism and the French Intellectuals: 1914-1960

DAVID CAUTE

Macmillan, $10

J. M. CAMERON

Trying to define an intellectual is a tiresome and rather silly game. We all know that the Professor of English at the University of X, a man who is a patron of avant-garde poets, subscribes to *Partisan Review* and voted twice for Stevenson, is an intellectual, whereas his colleague, the Professor of Business Administration, who wouldn't even wish to be caught with a book of poems on his desk and voted twice for Eisenhower, isn't. But the intellectual, conceived as a member of a class, the intelligentsia, scarcely exists in the English-speaking countries, though small groups in such metropolitan centers as London and New York romantically aspire to the status. To find a *class* of intellectuals one must go to France or to the socialist countries or back in time to the Russia of the Czars in that most wonderful of all epochs, the Russian nineteenth century.

What is it that gives to a loose grouping of writers, painters, philosophers, natural scientists, lawyers, and what have you a common consciousness and a common style of feeling, things which may even manifest themselves in tricks of manner and fashions of dress, modes of sexual behavior and preferences among holiday resorts? The answer seems clear. Intellectuals feel themselves to be members of a common body and to have a specific social role (commonly, critical and revolutionary) where they live in a society with a peculiar past: one in which the educated classes (aside from the clergy) owe their existence to social and economic developments that came about independently of the wishes and projects of the ruling classes of the old regime.

If in the past the intellectual has commonly been a bourgeois ideologue, this has been because he belonged to a society in which the bourgeoisie had until the day before yesterday been a revolutionary class and which continued —the anti-clerical Radical Socialist bourgeois of the Third Republic provides a richly comic example of this— to demonstrate its political virtue by pretending that the old regime was threatening to make a comeback.

In any case, the dividing line between the bourgeois and the socialist ideologue is by no means clear, for the bourgeois revolution in the nineteenth century is a process continuous with the proletarian revolutionary movement which has its dress rehearsals in 1848 and 1870. What Marx and Engels, Blanqui and Jaurès, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky, Nehru and Mao Tse-tung have in common is their membership in a class, or sub-class, which developed under a despotic regime but which could only realize itself in conflict with this regime. This is why the intelligentsia is a phenomenon of countries with a despotic or colonial present or past.

Of course, the old regime has always had its intellectual apologists, often theologians of one sort or another, more rarely lawyers or men of letters, and these too are members of the intelligentsia, for the same situation which enables other intellectuals to feel out their revolutionary role enables these to define themselves as defenders of

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the established order. Sometimes they defend this order in terms so brutal —think of De Maistre, for example, or, later, Maurras—that they seem to be perverse, players in a black comedy rather than serious men; but this brings out their spiritual kinship with the revolutionary intelligentsia, for both groups are doctrinaire and both repudiate the complex and humdrum present in favor of the glorious future or the glamorous past.

Britain and the United States have never had a well-marked-out class of intellectuals simply because the erosion of the old regime was substantially complete by the end of the seventeenth century; and because the revolutionary intellectuals of this tradition are nonconformist theologians rooted in the sectarian traditions of left-wing Protestantism. The categories of their thinking look back to the passionately religious seventeenth century, not forward to the age of the steam engine and the breech-loading cannon. Even when, in the nineteen-thirties, British and American intellectuals in fair numbers were brought under the enchantments of Marxism, the atmosphere in Anglo-Saxon intellectual circles was still that of the conventicle rather than the revolutionary club and the accents were those of the pulpit rather than the tribune. When the contemporary British or American intellectual recoils, horrified, from all that he conceives to belong to suburban existence, it is with the accent of a puritan calling on men to shun the theater or the brothel.

For right-thinking people in Britain and the United States the word "intellectual" stands for danger all the same. The intellectual is the man who doesn't mind if his sister marries a Negro and, worse, is working for a state of society in which your sister may be put in the way of marrying a Negro. That is, he must be a radical, a pinko, a commie, a subversive, un-British or un-American. Sometimes he is a Jew, and this is comforting in that it confirms a common prejudice; sometimes—Oh shame! Oh horror!—he is a Catholic, thus confirming the prejudices of the Klan but betraying that cosy picture of Catholicism cherished by the Anglo-American-Hibernian Catholic establishment.

The right-thinking people are not wrong. Their sentiments are ignoble and their dispositions are mean; but they are right in seeing in even the Anglo-Saxon intellectual a threat to the established disorder. He may not be, and in this he differs from his brother in France or Brazil, a child of the *philosophes;* but in his own bumbling nonconformist way he represents the application of intelligence to social life. Indeed, precisely because his vision is less cosmic, his thought less doctrinaire, his sense of the coarse texture of social life more acute, a Veblen or a Tawney will do more to change the practice of society than the thinker who is cap-

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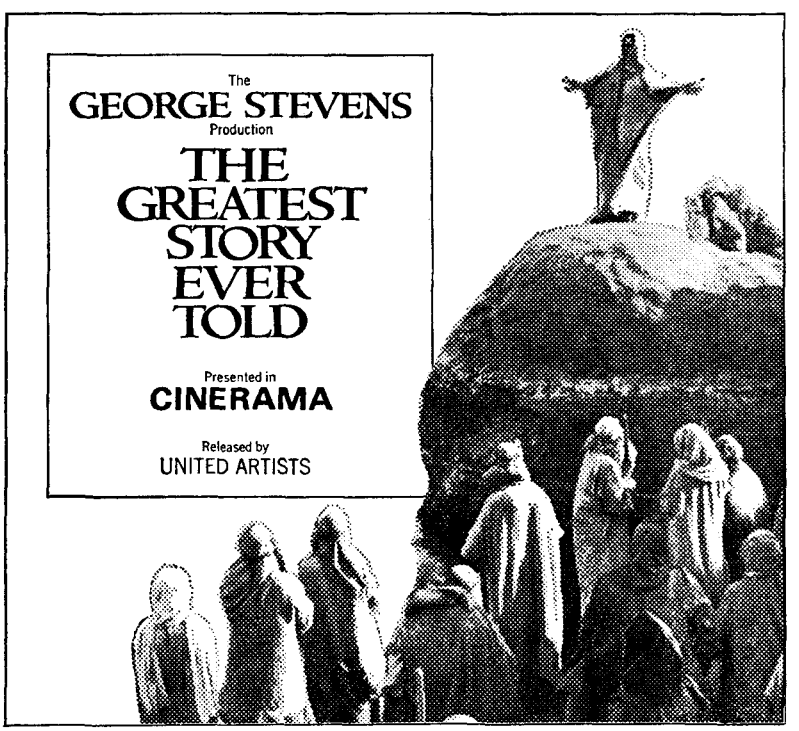

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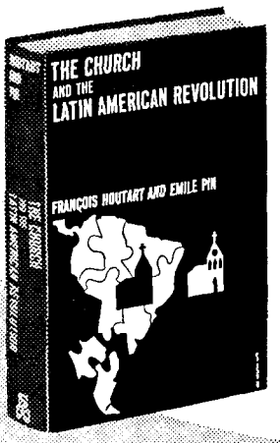
tivated by what lies on the far side of the revolutionary day of judgment.

In the book under review, which is a thorough survey and analysis of the role of the educated classes in France in the extremely complex history of French Communism, David Caute shows enough sympathy with Communism to be able to identify himself imaginatively with the predicament of the French intellectual and enough integrity to see what is tragic in the long love affair between so many French intellectuals and a party that has degenerated to its present state of intellectual ossification. It is not commonly realized in Britain and the United States how much the French Communists are in effect a part of the French establishment, how totally devoid they are of revolutionary élan, how much on such a crucial issue as that of Algeria they trimmed their sails to the basest nationalist winds.

In the Communist world their closest spiritual kinship is with the East Germans and the Czechs, the last defenders of Stalinism. The career of so typical a party intellectual as Aragon makes the career of Ilya Ehrenburg look like that of an independent and courageous man. So many intellectuals of note have joined the French party or travelled with it that a party of ex-Communists would in France be a most luminous affair; for almost every honest intellectual who has belonged to the party has either left it or been spewed out, sometimes to the engaging accompaniment—so imitative are the French apparatus men of their Russian models—of accusations that he has been unmasked as a police spy.

Mr. Caute sums up as follows: "If we accept left-wing premises, it becomes clear that the tragedy of French Communism was not the intellectuals it seduced or those it lost, but rather those it maimed. . . . Nonentities told Prenant what to think; Lefebvre was ostracized and humiliated by his own pupils; Picasso, Léger and Pignon kept silent while Fougeron laid down the law. . . . Malraux, Koestler, Gide, Sartre and Camus were attacked not by men of their own caliber, in intellectual



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terms which might have commanded respect, but by 'hatchetmen' resorting to personal slanders, aspersions, insults."

Mr. Caute's book is indispensable for the student of our time. It is also, unfortunately, very badly written; indeed, it may possibly be the worst-written book ever produced by a Fellow of All Souls. The following passage sufficiently illustrates the vices of Mr. Caute's style:

"European Communism was born out of the ashes of past revolutionary movements, socialist, anarchist and syndicalist, movements whose harsh threats and brave promises had been drowned and mocked by the disciplined tramp of marching boots. Under the impact of war, theories and dogmas, once so vehemently defended, lost their luster and wilted, before springing to life again with an intensified dynamism."

There is really no excuse for this fustian stuff. Mr. Caute has written a good and useful book. With a bit of attention to the English language he might have written a classic.

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Up the Down Staircase

BEL KAUFMAN

Prentice Hall, $4.95

DAVID LODGE

Up the Down Staircase is a novel about a young teacher's first semester at a New York High School. Sylvia Barrett, fresh from completing her Master's thesis on Chaucer's octosyllabic couplet, struggles to teach English (or "Communications Arts") in the teeth of endless administrative distractions, inadequate facilities, insufficient textbooks, overcrowded classes and pupils with acute personal problems which lead in two cases to a fatal abortion and an attempted suicide. Desperate and disheartened, and injured in a stupid accident, she is tempted to retire to the civilized haven of a college post. But (a nice touch) an administrative failure to handle her resignation competently gives her time to relent and decide to return to the fray.

The title derives from a note the teacher receives from an administrative zombie called McHabe: "Please admit bearer to class — Detained by me for going up the Down staircase and subsequent insolence."

It's a good title, conveying a sense of both the anarchic world the heroine inhabits, and of the bureaucratic interference which makes it well-nigh impossible for her to cultivate any true educational order. The source of the title is also representative of the author's technique. There is no narrative in the conventional sense; instead, rather in the style of pop art, we get a montage of letters, notes, circulars and memoranda, pupil's compositions, suggestions, work-books and drawings, lesson-plans, committee minutes, extracts from the school paper and blackboard inscriptions.

Typographically the book is quite an achievement; and on a deeper level Miss Kaufman creates a very vivid and generally convincing impression of Calvin Coolidge High School by assembling this sequence of fleeting paper epiphanies. She is an excellent

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mimic of many forms of expression, from the jargon of educational bureaucrats to the artless, ungrammatical but often eloquent writings of children.

The great merit of this method is its objectivity but unfortunately it is not sustained. The main themes are elaborated in Sylvia's own notes to a colleague, and in her long letters to a correspondent called Ellen. These letters often bewail, superfluously, the conditions that have already been objectively presented in documentary form; and the more the heroine lays bare her feelings about teaching the less interested in her we become. "Whenever I feel too frustrated to go on" she writes to Ellen, "I find an unexpected compensation: a girl whose face lights up when she enters the room; a boy who begins to make sense out of words on a printed page; or a class that groans in dismay when the end-of-period bell rings."

It's not that there's anything wrong with such sentiments; it's just that no teacher worthy of our respect would utter them in quite that style of bright cliché. True, pretty Sylvia Barrett has a moment of truth late in the novel when, confronting a clever but delinquent pupil she has been trying to "save," she realizes that her teaching, for all its energetic dedication, has been vitiated by self-centeredness. But the scene, and the analysis of it, are not altogether convincing, and in any case come too late to redeem either the heroine or the novel.

Miss Kaufman has written a book which is often witty and ironical, and at the same time often sentimental and eager to please. It is a very fair account, one would guess, of life in a New York High School: it shows us good as well as bad teachers, responsive as well as hostile pupils. Fiction, however, doesn't—can't—aim to be "fair" in quite this fashion; and in the case of *Up the Down Staircase* the penalty of the attempt cuts two ways.

On the one hand the educationalist's felt obligation to be fair and constructive deprives the characters of imaginative life: this begins with the heroine, but once we perceive that she is a

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receptacle for typical responses to teaching rather than a human being we begin to have doubts about the rest of the characters, about the too-neat way in which they illustrate all the recognized school types. On the other hand, the fictional story threatens constantly to soften the harsh facts of an educational crisis about which the author is genuinely and creditably concerned. One can imagine many readers putting down this book cheered by the thought that as long as there are teachers like Sylvia Barrett the overcrowded classrooms, inadequate equipment and administrative bumbledom don't represent too grave a problem. But there aren't, and they do.

Dylan Thomas: His Life and Work

JOHN ACKERMAN

Oxford University Press, $5.75

IRVING D. SUSS

Add one more slim volume to the growing shelf of critical studies that fail to open more deeply for us the poems of Dylan Thomas. Out of the fact that Thomas happened to be Welsh, John Ackerman elaborates a myth that his poetry was Welsh, too. The Welsh names, the features of the particular Welsh landscapes that Dylan Thomas knew, the Welsh people whom he loved or laughed at—all of this can be found, of course, in his poems and in his stories and essays, too. But beyond such details Mr. Ackerman finds in the poet's work attitudes and practices that he claims are indigenous to Wales.

Calling William Carlos Williams a New Jersey poet doesn't tell us anything about his poems; it merely gives an approximate address that would not help the mailman deliver a letter to him even if he were alive. Calling John Ciardi a Metuchen, New Jersey poet might help the mailman, but it would tell us nothing about the relationship between his poems and those of Dr. Williams. Mr. Ackerman offers his study as "an interpretation of Dylan Thomas' life and work in relation to his Welsh background." So far as the poems themselves are concerned, the Welsh background turns out to be little more than a first and last address for Thomas.

Thomas himself spoke the most potent reply to Mr. Ackerman's central theme in a BBC lecture on Welsh poets in 1946: "This is not a programme of Welsh poetry, nor of Anglo-Welsh poetry—the latter is an ambiguous compromise. . . . Welshmen have written, from time to time, exceedingly good poetry in English. I should like to think that that is because they were, and are, good poets rather than good Welshmen. It's the poetry, written in the language which is most natural to the poet, that counts, not his continent, country, island, race, class, or political persuasion."

To urge his thesis, Mr. Ackerman points to parallels between the poems of Dylan Thomas and those of other poets living in Wales, ascribing the similarities to either the Welsh world view or the Welsh poetic tradition. To this particular assertion Thomas also had an answer in his 1946 lecture: "I do not think that there was in common among these poets [writing between the end of the century and 1944] anything but a love of poetry and of their own country. They did not, to any marked degree, derive from the same poetical sources."

Mr. Ackerman's method is peculiarly subjective. Almost any human attitude can in his view become a "Welsh" attitude. For example, a pervasive contemporary brashness in treating things sacred might appear to Mr. Ackerman a reaction against puritanical Nonconformity—hence Welsh. And so when dealing with a poem like "This was the crucifixion on the mountain," a sonnet that presses details of the Passion to new images ("Time's nerve in vinegar," "The bright thorns I wept"), Mr. Ackerman characteristically finds the colloquialisms that go beyond cynicism ("Jack Christ") to be Welsh and not modern merely.

What Mr. Ackerman ascribes to Welsh influences might just as readily —and in the light of what Thomas himself has said — have come from his

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father's library, especially from his reading of the Romantic and metaphysical poets. The view of the poet as seer, the lushness of imagery, incantatory effects, the fervency, the melancholy aspiration, the sense of lost innocence — these are romantic, not Welsh, usages and qualities, because they adhere to mind, not to place. Mr. Ackerman's contention that the poems "did not derive, to any great extent" from the Romantics would at once run against the wild *Walpurgisnacht* of "In the White Giant's Thigh," for example, or the bucolic innocence of "Fern Hill." What has frequently been recognized is the pressure on Dylan Thomas' imagination exerted by the ideas and style of 17th-century metaphysical poets, like John Donne and George Herbert. Mr. Ackerman recognizes this influence, too, but apparently will not be aware that the pervasiveness of this influence on Thomas' poetry denies his thesis.

The longer part of Mr. Ackerman's book is devoted to an analysis of the three volumes of the earlier poetry, the volume of later poems, *Deaths and Entrances*, the eight new pieces included in *Collected Poems*, and the prose works. Following the format of numberless doctoral dissertations, he ties each volume of the poet's work to the general thesis and then selects perhaps a dozen examples for line-by-line or stanza-by-stanza adjectival paraphrase.

There was here an opportunity to explore the singing quality of Thomas' poems, that marvelous verbal music that leaps from the page with almost the force of his own reading. And there is, indeed, some discussion of the use of assonance, alliteration, internal rhyme. One wonders, however, about the ear of a critic who hears the "a" of "apple" repeated in the "a" of "about," and the rhythm of "young and easy" repeated in "trees and leaves." Mr. Ackerman uncovers no patterns in the repetitions of sound, though he says that these repetitions "rather than normal syntax suggest the sense-structure."

There is a syllabic analysis of two poems, "Fern Hill" and "Poem in Octo-

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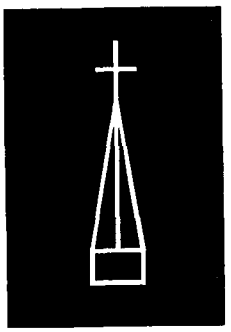

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ber," but this statistical account really does not take us much beyond the statistics themselves. They are used in the book to show a stanzaic regularity that Mr. Ackerman admires. Mainly because the same number of syllables is used in the respective lines of each stanza of a poem, he holds the poems to be "the result of hard and devoted work." If he had observed the superbly controlled metrical variations that help to create the music, he could indeed have acclaimed "the ideal of craftsmanship that Thomas maintained." As Mr. Ackerman points out, there are fourteen syllables in the first lines of each of the stanzas of "Fern Hill"; it is not the number, however, but the metrical arrangement of those syllables in their deliberate variety that releases the experience of the poem.

"Fern Hill" recreates a city child's days and nights in the country. In the first stanza, close about the house, and in the second, as the child ventures not much farther—to the barn—the first lines combine anapests and iambs in a smooth running pattern with identical configurations. The sudden burst of breathless joy in stanza three is conveyed partly by a metrical shift in which the opening anapests of stanzas one and two become an incomplete stressed foot. Then follow two anapests and an unaccented foot that completes the first. Two anapests race to the end of the line that runs on to the next. The effect, after the smooth regularity of the opening lines of the first two stanzas, makes the pulse leap. Mr. Ackerman's statistics do not suggest this, though he is aware that it happens.

The treatment of Dylan Thomas and his poems in this book is serious-minded and adoring. Though it is subtitled "His Life and Work," there is nothing beyond the surface facts of Thomas' career and no questioning of Caitlin Thomas' feeling that America killed her husband. The book opens with Thomas' well known remark: "One: I am a Welshman; two: I am a drunkard; three: I am a lover of the human race, especially of women." Mr. Ackerman comments that this is "concise, humorous, and not untruthful. . . . It shows that he was aware of the extent to which his temperament and his imagination were the products of his Welsh environment." On the jacket the same quotation is used; the blurb-writer calls it an "ironical self-description."

The Ambassador

MORRIS L. WEST

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EDWIN KENNEBECK

The Ambassador, which is about South Vietnam, is not to be confused with the novel of similar title by Henry James. Though, come to think of it, correspondences between the two might be fun to contemplate: a sensitive man goes to a foreign land to straighten out a mixed-up affair, and finds when he gets there that the trouble-makers are not what they had seemed to be. And, in fact, he finds himself morally implicated in the mix-up. There is even a *confidante* with whom he almost becomes emotionally involved. Never mind.

Morris L. West's efficient novel is about a fictional ambassador named Maxwell Amberley from a fictional country called the United States, sent to another fictional country called South Vietnam, which is under the rule of a fictional Catholic president named Phung Van Cung. Amberley, who narrates the story, becomes involved with a fictional American named Yaffa, who represents an organization called, for want of a better title, the Central Intelligence Agency.

The Ambassador comes head-on against the problem—foreshadowed clearly at the very start—of what to do when the time comes to get rid of Cung. This tyrant—though a noble man, a pious Catholic, and a dedicated patriot—is not running the country the way the United States and other factions think he should; he is temperamentally unable to make gestures that would enable his people to sympathize with him, and he persecutes the Budd-

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hists cruelly. Cung threatens to negotiate with Ho Chi Minh unless the United States allows him to run his country his own way, but with the aid of American money and *matériel.* So, at last, our Ambassador decides that he must secretly back the local generals in a coup against Cung, with the hope that the President's life will be spared. It isn't. The moral confusion of his deed shatters the Ambassador; he nearly loses his sanity, and retreats to his Japanese teacher in the hope of finding some solace.

The story has a manufactured complexity. Based as it is on the "All of Asia will be lost if South Vietnam is lost" assumption, its issues are made more clear-cut than the narrator's spiritual confusion indicates. The suggestion that Vietnam—if the United States pulled out—might solve its own problems without being swallowed up by the Chinese monster is made a few times, but only as a disruptive whisper mysteriously planted by the French. Also, this fictional Cung has no fictional female relatives who might complicate matters further by talking of Buddhists' "barbecuing" themselves. It makes for a readable story, with unity, coherence, and plenty of emphasis.

There are, after all, even less complex views of the same fictional nation. Consider the testimony of a recent visitor, as transmitted to us by columnist Hy Gardner: "Jill St. John, the actress who checked into the Caravel Hotel in Saigon with the Bob Hope troupe only a half-hour before the Brinks Hotel, directly opposite, was blown up, recalled the scene. . . . 'I was so stunned hearing the explosion so close I dropped to the floor waiting for the proverbial second shoe to drop. Since the elevator cables had snapped I ran down four flights of stairs to get a drink. . . . After the milling crowds, some 20,000, were dispersed, Ann Sidney ("Miss World") and I commandeered a couple of husky MPs to give us an instant Cook's tour of the town. We were shocked by the look of hatred in the eyes of the natives whenever they spotted a well-dressed, well-fed American.'"

We do not know whether Miss St. John attempted to administer first-aid or comfort or even entertainment to stunned natives (the troupe was there, I believe, to cheer up American soldiers). The story is always incomplete, alas, whether told by a movie star, your favorite weekly magazine, or a novelist.

Scripture and Ecumenism

Ed. LEONARD J. SWIDLER

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RAYMOND E. BROWN, S.S.

This is a collection of nine papers from a seminar which took place in early 1964, sponsored by Duquesne University (Catholic) and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (Presbyterian). Perhaps a better title for the volume would have been *Scripture and Tradition, and Ecumenism,* for the majority of the speakers are theologians discuss-

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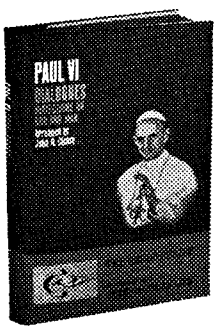

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ing the place of the Bible in the Church. Basking in the light of Vatican II, the speakers heave a sigh of relief that the Catholic Church is not going to produce a statement on Revelation which will distinguish Scripture and Tradition as two sources—a statement which in our time, from the viewpoint of the Protestant scholar Lukas Visscher, would be "worse than Trent."

Those who speak on Scripture and Tradition represent a liberal segment of the Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic churches. No one is for *sola Scriptura* in the crude sense; and so in this ecumenical colloquium, as in most such colloquia, the fundamentalist position (Protestant or Catholic) is not heard from. Such an omission is probably dictated by the fact that fundamentalists are not generally interested in ecumenism, but the practical result is that a large body of practicing Christians has no voice.

Robert McAfee Brown (Presbyterian) explains Barth's thought wherein past tradition is a very valuable guide to the Word of God, but only a relative authority which in principle is fallible. John Meyendorff (Orthodox) sees tradition as a milieu in which Scripture must be read, a view not unlike that of George Tavard (Catholic); but Meyendorff insists that the Orthodox Church has never proclaimed dogmas that are not direct interpretations of historical facts related in the Bible. Markus Barth (Presbyterian) maintains that *sola Scriptura* is not opposed to Church traditions, but stresses the danger that man-made traditions will captivate God, and thus prevent God from speaking through the Bible to reform the Church.

Many of these observations have been made before, but there is a certain usefulness in having short statements of such views gathered in one place. It seems possible to me that with enough distinctions a statement of the relations between Scripture and Tradition satisfactory to all the larger Christian groups may ultimately be formulated. Yet I can conceive that such an abstract statement may not change in the least the differing attitudes toward doctrines that are not clearly scriptural, e.g., some Marian doctrines. As a Catholic, I wonder if, in the laudable desire to avoid positing two distinct sources of revelation, Scripture and Tradition, we really solve anything by telling ourselves that all truths are in Scripture interpreted by Tradition. Father Tavard appeals to "the spiritual sense of the Bible [which] escapes all methods and techniques." I cannot see how such a suggestion clarifies Catholic thought, or makes the Catholic position any more understandable to Protestants, who will be rightly suspicious that working with such a principle we can make Scripture mean anything that we want.

Among the other articles, that of A. A. Stephenson, S.J., gives an interesting description of the development of Catholic theological method. D. N. Freedman (Presbyterian) has a judicious article on the question of the "common Bible." His is a positive attitude, but his recognition of the difficulties may annoy some of those enthusiastic for this project. For instance, he does *not* tell us that a few "Catholic" changes in the RSV will give us a common Bible. The Jewish voice in the colloquium, that of Steven Schwarzschild, is brutally honest, and somewhat discordant in the generally optimistic tone of the book. For him ecumenism is a Christian problem in which, taken strictly, Judaism is not concerned. Despite the attempt to avoid the terminology and mentality of a mission to the Jews, Christianity will almost inevitably

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REVIEWERS

J. M. CAMERON, *our regular correspondent from Great Britain, is presently Visiting Professor at Notre Dame University.*

DAVID LODGE *is visiting this country on a Commonwealth Fellowship. His novel,* Ginger, You're Barmy, *is due shortly.*

IRVING D. SUSS *is a free-lance writer.*

EDWIN KENNEBECK *is on the staff of a New York publishing house.*

FATHER RAYMOND E. BROWN, S.S. *is a Fellow of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, where he worked on the unpublished manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls.*

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have a proselytizing approach to Judaism. The Vatican II statement exculpating the Jews from deicide has no real meaning to Judaism, for a Jew does not think of Jesus as God. Finally, if the Scriptures (Old Testament, although the term is objectionable, since for the Jew there is no New Testament) are to be a basis for Jewish-Christian dialogue, then Christians must include in the discussion the full concept of Torah, Written (Scripture and Oral (Mishnah and Talmud). One wishes that observations on this paper were included.

OP ART

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ART

The Museum of Modern Art in New York has entitled their current lively exhibition of Optical Art: *The Responsive Eye*. Unlike a merely descriptive label, this points out the prime objective—and may even imply that it is a limited objective.

Cezanne said that "Monet is only an eye, but what an eye!" Optical Art, by sidestepping the subordinate clause, is the logical conclusion of that reckless remark. The whole field of visual psychology is enthusiastically explored and exploited by the Op and quasi-Op artists, usually as if they were on holiday and engaged in purely scientific games. The public viewing their work responds on the whole like the public in a fun-fair. They are responsive eyes, but who is responsible and for what?

A floating retinal after-image is a part of the composition in A. Liberman's *Continuous on Red*, optical illusion creates the queasy form in Bridget Riley's *Hesitate;* color values and interlocking lines and shapes set up see-saw and other movements all over the lot. Some of these elements have been present and even expressive in subsidiary roles in art over the centuries, but now they take over the center of the stage. You might say they take over the stage entirely, if it weren't for a handful of consequential exceptions, among them the above named.

The Op artist plays fair, he plays it absolutely straight. He might have confused the issue considerably by not employing an abstract idiom, for instance. Liberman's ghost, Riley's half-swoon, Albers' stately colors: if these *aperçus* had been embedded in a portrait, a landscape, a still-life, they would have lost their point, their zest, or their stern delicacy. But for the most part the Op artist of course uses the abstract idiom because it is the most useful tool for the game he is playing with the responsive eye.

Most of these Optical works have no native eloquence, they have no reverberations or second thoughts, they do not haunt the imagination. Ellsworth Kelly's *Green Blue Red* is empty of his customary hard-edge poetry: his panel-colors simply step forward or sink back into their setting. For one vivid Kenneth

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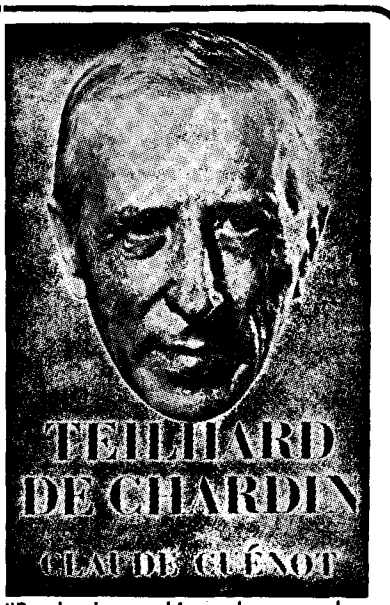

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Is he really overruling
Every ADA appeaser?
Has he crossed it, just like Caesar?
Has he harkened back to Harry?
(Has he borrowed from Our Barry?)
Has he finished conning Kennan?
Has he finally read Lenin?"

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Nolan, a Cunningham shapely *Equivocation,* a Gertrude-Steinish Reinhardt *Red Painting #7,* there are overwhelming numbers of unrewarding eye-exercises.

These last luckily borrow a lot of strength from being hung together—this is really a spectacle rather than an exhibition. The public can hardly fail to respond to such a barrage of explicit stimuli, and the lack of implicit ones is barely noticeable.

The artist of course has always had to handle the responsive eye of the public—he had to develop a sixth sense about it. His hand not only has to have the skill to convey what he sees (or doesn't see) in some memorable way, but he has to know how to manipulate your seeing. His "I" and eye are responsible, and your "I" and eye are responsive. The Op artist seems to have opted for eyes without "I."

The upshot of this extended view of Optical Art is that one cannot help but feel a fuller responsibility is necessary to create a fuller response: you feel cheated of the creative *coup de grâce.* This show of talent is too much for pure mechanical responsiveness, you may feel like Pavlov's dog (only more cheerful) as you totter out. The more 'aware' vision of the artist should evoke a greater awareness in the spectator, not just ring the bell to stimulate a predictable reflex.

The most optimistic conclusion possible in the face of the proliferation of Optical Art is that it is a sort of training or proving ground for a lot of artists, who may incorporate the results in a larger frame of reference some halcyon day.

BETTY KAUFMAN

CORRESPONDENCE

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(*Continued from page 237*)

the temporal order. A priest brings to this work the power of the Holy Spirit in his role of an ordained priest. He leads in the work by witnessing to the love that is required for the Christian task of renewal within the world.

With confidence in the power of Christ, a priest has to come to grips with the circumstances of time. Without losing his love for the Church, his attempt to realize the word can increase his love for the whole Church and make his message more credible.

(REV.) EDWARD J. TOOMEY

"Ecclesiastical Hypochondria"

Davenport, Iowa

To the Editors: Justus George Lawler's "The Problem of Priests in the World" [April 16] struck me as an erudite display of ecclesiastical hypochondria. Not bad, for a layman. May we now anxiously await its dire counterpart: "The Problem of Laymen in the Church; Earmarks of Creeping Clericalization?" And then, for a third portentous set of symptoms: "The Case of the Lay Deacon; When Worlds Collide!"

Seriously, I am unconvinced of the danger of anticlericalism, "sociological" or otherwise, in America today. If the modern priest, for whatever reason, is unwilling to assume the risks of at least a temporary active commitment to Christianizing the social order, his presence in the world is likely to arouse not the violent hatred of yesterday but a total and complete indifference.

Lawler does ignore one factor which certainly ought to have some bearing on the priest's assessment of his role in the world, standing as he does in the place of Christ before the eyes of men: What would be the "witness" of Christ today? During his active ministry on earth, he was not particularly noted for playing it safe.

THOMAS F. CHOUTEAU

Outmoded Scholasticism

Leicester, Mass.

To the Editors: I'm afraid the article by Justus George Lawler, "The Problem of Priests In The World" [April 16], will have no effect on the men about whom he is concerned. Mostly because for them, being in the world is not all that much of a problem. And further, because they have long since rejected the distinctions and categories on which

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he builds his case. His outmoded Scholasticism will find no response in their existential hearts and his utterly "legalist-organizational" notion of the Church will be rejected by their biblically informed minds.

There is absolutely nothing about Baptism or Orders to suggest that a man's relation to the temporal order should be different according as he has received two rather than one of these sacraments. On the contrary, since Orders develops out of Baptism the interaction between the Christian and the world is not altered but somehow intensified by its addition. Once and for all we must stop talking about differences between the priest's and the layman's proper activity towards the world. None exists. And the very discussion obscures a basic Scriptural theme about our being together a priestly people. At home, among the Baptized, there is a proper role and specific function for the ordained, but when it comes to shaping out of history the Kingdom of Christ, he is part and parcel of the redeeming community.

Mr. Lawler's words about the sacerdotal character being blurred by the laicized heart of a priest are meaningless. Having rejected any distinction between lay and clerical in the supreme task given to us, "the transfiguration of matter by spirit," the new breed of priests would deny having laicized hearts but they would gladly claim to have secularized ones. They relentlessly insist that the eternal can only be touched in the temporal and that the Kingdom and its promises can only be reached through the world and its pains. Ultimately, they say, the sacral is nothing more than the secular which is consciously in Christ.

These points are so obvious that many immediately agree and then go on theologizing, in archaic thought patterns, until they somehow reach the longed-for conclusion that the sacral is not really secular after all. Mr. Lawler, in a way that defies understanding, seems to have done just this. But the priests at whom his *monitum* is aimed though confused, are not persuaded. On this point, and on this one alone, I think it is fair to say they are extremists. Extreme in the exact same way the Incarnation is extreme. There is no interposition. God really did enter history in Christ. From this, the argument runs that our salvation depends upon our total, unreserved commitment to and involvement in the natural order.

It is unfortunate that in warning priests involved in the civil rights struggle about obedience to their superiors Mr. Lawler mentions Father Leonard Feeney and Father Emmet McLoughlin. This was in bad taste. Civil rights priests may reflect the "marvelous new militancy" of which Dr. King speaks, but they also possess something of his restraint and non-violence. There is in them none of the bitterness and acrimony so characteristic of Fathers Feeney and McLoughlin. If in common they share an unwillingness to violate conscience, we recall that Father Feeney was the leader of a heresy which managed to attract to itself not a single priest.

On the other hand, the priests about whom Mr. Lawler is worried never

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These poets, authors and artists have been discussed recently in the pages of Commonweal. Though we are most widely known as a journal of opinion edited by Catholic laymen with an emphasis on public affairs, we consider it important to treat the major figures in the arts — particularly those most often overlooked by other magazines.

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think of themselves as leaders. They are, and know themselves to be, part of a great movement. Such priests are present in every diocese of the country, their spirit is shared by the majority of seminarians and it is unfair to suggest that they are loners gone mad with an obsession.

And this nonsense about a priest's losing more and more his hold on universal values as he gives himself to the solution of concrete problems peculiar to a given area! What does this say of Jesus? He didn't seem to be troubled much by the fear of losing "communion with the whole." But the world still hears the Sermon on the Mount though it was spoken centuries ago to a few thousand. Did He deny resurrection to the rest of us when He, in tears, called Lazarus alone out of the tomb? Not at all. In restoring sight to the blind man he opened the eyes of us all.

But enough. The fact is priests of the new breed love the world. They love it as Christ did, in specifics. They are involved in all its pains and problems. They refuse any suggestion that the layman should care for it more tenderly or love its people more immediately. Their vision is the only orthodoxy. Articles like Mr. Lawler's, and the distinguished persons he quotes and misquotes may disturb them for a moment, but "like the tree planted by the water, they shall not be moved."

(REV.) BERNARD E. GILGUN

Above Time?

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: I found Mr. Lawler's article [April 16] rather disturbing. While I do not doubt that it is the role of the priest "to be the sign before the world of the second coming of Christ," I do not see how this can be achieved by their removing themselves from time and the painful struggles that men commit themselves to in order to increase the possibilities of justice and peace in this world. What does it mean to say that because of his mission to the temporal "the layman cannot ordinarily place himself above time"?

PROGRESS

During the past few years, mankind has developed some really fascinating items, e.g., tummy-t.v., tigers for your tank (or your hair), catsup with pizza flavor (or hickory, if you prefer), and a car (pardon, a wagon) to hold the entire population of Jiggs, Nevada.

Somehow, in the light of all this, our achievements never seem so great. After all, what can compete with instant bananas?

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What manner of man even extraordinarily does, and, if he does, on those rare occasions can we say he is in his right mind while so doing? I distrust messages from men above time, especially when such messages are so bland and take so much of Sunday morning to deliver.

Messages from on high have the unhappy facility of never losing their vaunted position. It is my suspicion that that has been the Church's problem in recent times. While other men and other beliefs have been taking the full share of the responsibility of shaping our times, the Church has been content to give messages from on high which could only be heard by the Church itself. Perhaps there is "discernment" in this, but I—being in time—don't see it.

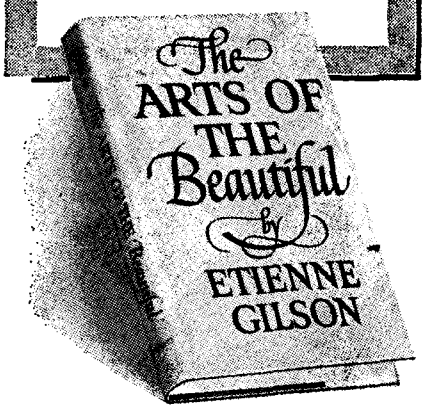
While we are alive and are this thing of flesh and blood, there is no other order than the temporal. The eternal order is a hope. We may plan for its fulfillment, live for it, die for it, but nonetheless it remains a hope. We can live in the hope of the eternal, but while we are *in mundo huius temporis* we cannot live in the eternal. This time, this world, today is the only context for witnessing.

Mr. Lawler suggests that priests should remove themselves from active manipulation of human affairs, but are the roles he assigns to the ordained and the layman really different from what is now prevalent? Instead of being the hands and the purse of the clergy, it seems in his view that the layman is now to become a highly sophisticated automaton who is to be programmed and set to working by the clearly discerning clergy. But in case of conflict between priest and bishop, how is the layman to judge who has the clearer discernment, unless he, too, is blessed in equal measure?

Until the second coming, we have no alternative than to deal with our religious problems, both personal and organizational in a human way. It may sound shocking to some, but if God thought it worth while to become man, we might as well follow suit.

KEVIN J. DONNELLY

"Art is the making of beauty for beauty's own sake..."



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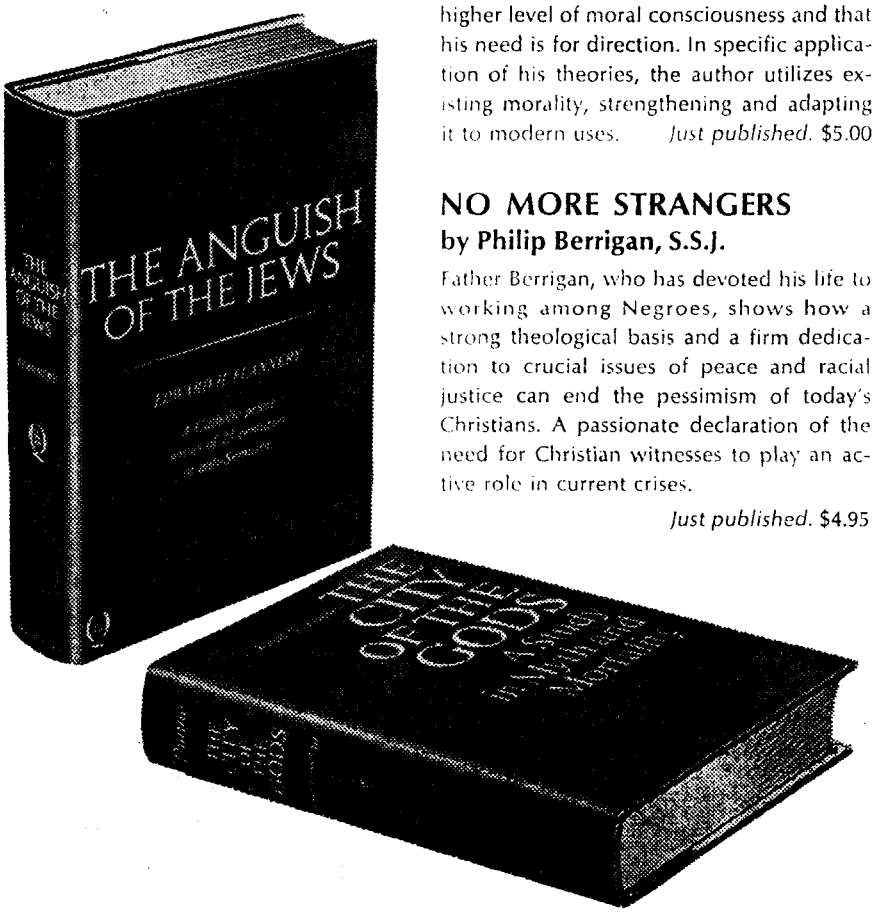

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